Leo Strauss

Plato's *Meno*

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(90a-95a)

Socrates tells a shocked Anytus that Meno should go to the sophists to learn the virtue he desires, and Socrates argues that even the great Athenian statesmen could not teach their sons to have the virtue they possessed. Plato here abstracts, says Strauss, from the natures that different men possess. Anytus threatens Socrates; unlike Meno, Anytus did not think Socrates was safe in Athens.

Session 11: The teachability of virtue (2) 239-264
(95a-97d)

A haughty Meno is taken down a step or two: he admits that he's like "everybody else" in Thessaly in thinking sometimes that sophists teach virtue and sometimes that they cannot. And Socrates exploits this fact: he leads poor Meno first toward Protagoras (virtue can be taught) and then back toward Gorgias (virtue cannot be taught). And a softening and crestfallen Meno wonders, since virtue can't be taught, that perhaps there are no good men after all. And when Socrates introduces the possibility that right opinion can lead as well as and even without knowledge, Meno defends the dignity of knowledge. At this point in the dialogue, says Strauss, we see that Meno is not quite the hopeless dunce and arch-villain that Klein makes him out to be.

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(97c-100c) (K, 248-50)

Socrates knows that right opinion is not the same as knowledge: the latter keeps the former from running away like the statues of Daedalus, and Meno agrees with an oath. But Socrates again pulls the rug from under Meno and again, as regards virtue, turns him

still to Gorgias on the grounds that there are no teachers of virtue. Rather, the Athenian statesmen had but right opinion, and that only by divine dispensation: like poets who know what they say but cannot establish its truth. We're stuck with that, says Socrates, unless there *is* someone who can make a statesman from another and after they investigate successfully the one *eidos* of the virtues. Socrates then asks the gentled Meno to make Anytus gentler too.

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If virtue is divinely-dispensed right opinion, what, asks Strauss, are those not favored by the gods to do? If, as Klein suggests, all virtue based on memory (or opinion) is surely vice, then all kinds of virtue not based on insight are the same as Meno's arch-villainy. What then, again asks Strauss, are non-philosophers to do? Why does the term *nomos* never appear in the *Meno*?

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Strauss and Klein on Plato's *Meno*

Jerry Weinberger

To explain his selection of the *Meno* for an "introduction" to political philosophy, in 1966, Leo Strauss referred to his two most recent previous seminars on Plato: *Gorgias* (1963) and *Protagoras* (1965). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates demonstrates that Gorgias's rhetoric, though not a sham and "a necessary ingredient of the cosmos of the arts," is ultimately subordinate to and ministerial to philosophy. But Socrates shows the limits of that rhetoric properly understood by failing to persuade the well-meaning but justice-debunking Callicles of the goodness of justice.[i] In the *Protagoras*, Socrates refutes the famous sophist's (sham) claim to teach virtue by refuting his understanding of what virtue is (sesson 1: 9).[ii] These three issues—sophistry, what virtue is and whether it can be taught, and the limits of true rhetoric—point directly to the *Meno*. For Meno, a beautiful and spoiled youth and student of Gorgias, from wild and lawless Thessaly, pounces on Socrates with the question of whether virtue can be taught and winds up at the end of the dialogue convinced of something that might be beneficial to Meno, to Socrates's eventual accuser Anytus (and thus to Socrates), and to the Athenians in general.

But these pregnant connections were not definitive reasons for Strauss's choice. Strauss tells us he was drawn to the connections by the recent appearance of a book by his longtime friend Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*.[iii] Strauss introduced Klein to the seminar participants as the author of *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, and as a scholar who benefitted from Heidegger's recovery of Aristotle from the strangling grip of historical scholarship but who objected to Heidegger's conclusions regarding Aristotle, and Plato as well: that they raised only then to becloud the fundamental question of being.[iv] Strauss praised Klein's book on Greek mathematics, but noted at the outset that the book on the *Meno* was not as good (session 1: 9-10). This

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[i] See session 11: 246-47, and for Socrates's positive view of Callicles see sessions 2: 32; 3: 60, 62; 6: 117; 8: 183; 15: 344.

[ii] Strauss first says that both rhetoric and sophistry are sham arts, but for a more elaborate and complementary discussion see session 11: 246-47.

[iii] *A Commentary on Plato's* Meno (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965). Henceforth (Klein).

[iv] *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968). For the close relationship between Strauss and Klein see "A Giving of Accounts, with Jacob Klein" in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 457-66, and "An Unspoken Prologue," in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* (September, 1978), 1-3. Their correspondence can be found in *Leo Strauss, Gesammelte Schriften*: Band 3, ed. Heinrich Meier, Zweite Auflage (J. B. Metzler, 2008).

initial passing comment proves to have been understated. In the second half of the seminar Strauss remarks that he was led astray "a bit" by Klein about the central question of the dialogue: Just who is this character, Meno? (session 11: 252). The misleading must have been more than just a bit, because Strauss then continues that, as happens in life, he was faced with the "very salutary but painful task to liberate" himself from the good impression Klein's book had at first made on him. And indeed, the seminar proves remarkable because it depicts a disagreement between two Plato scholars of the highest levels of intellect and seriousness about how to read a Platonic dialogue.

Strauss notes early on (session 2: 30-31) that the *Meno* is *the* Platonic dialogue on virtue, and that the question of Meno's soul is crucial because the dialogue transpires principally between Socrates and a young man who is far from a moral paragon. He is, as Klein points out, an "arch-villain" (Klein: 37). As we learn from Xenophon and elsewhere, Meno went on to infamy for his betrayal of his Greek fellow mercenaries to the King of Persia, for which it is said that King repaid him with a year of continual torture prior to his execution. The singular dialogue on virtue involves a man who goes on to ultimate vice and ultimate punishment.[v] Moreover, in the course of his dialogue with Meno Socrates has a second dialogue with Meno's guest-friend Anytus, which goes a long way to explain Socrates's demise at the hands of Anytus and the Athenian democracy on the charges of impiety and corrupting the youth. There is an obvious connection between Socrates's activity—philosophizing and conversing with young men—and the moral and political health of Athens. Just what that connection is remains to be seen.

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In an interview with George Anastaplo, Eva Brann, Klein's longtime colleague at St. John's College, Annapolis, when asked about the differences between Leo Strauss and Jacob Klein, recollected that "Strauss thought political philosophy was fundamental while Klein thought ontology, metaphysics, was fundamental and that the revolution in science was more telling for modernity than the political revolution."[vi] This difference of approach emerges early on in the seminar's discussion of the dialogue's opening scenes.

In these scenes (70 a1-77a2), the rich, well born, and beautiful Thessalian Meno accosts Socrates with a question: Is virtue either teachable or acquired by practice or by nature or by some other means?[vii] Socrates responds with the bold and shocking claim that neither he nor his fellow Athenians know anything about virtue, much less how it is acquired. Meno is astonished and asks if Socrates really means this, and Socrates says yes and adds that he's never met anyone who knows what virtue is. Meno asks if Socrates had met Gorgias when the latter was in Athens and whether Socrates thought Gorgias knew anything about virtue. So Socrates asks Meno, as an admiring student of Gorgias, to recollect what Gorgias said about what virtue is, although Meno should feel free to lay out on his own the opinions he shares with his teacher (70a-71d8).

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[v] Or, as regards the punishment, so we hope. See session 12: 284-85.

[vi] https://anastaplo.wordpress.com/2011/03/06/glimpses-of-leo-strauss-jacob-klein-and-st-johns-college/

[vii] I have used the translation by Robert C. Bartlett: *Protagoras and Meno* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Meno gives three consecutive answers, each time forced by Socrates to alter it. In his first answer, Meno responds by listing what is appropriate for a man, a woman, an old man, a child, and a slave to do in each circumstance and time of life. For a man, virtue is being able to carry out the affairs of the city and thus help friends and harm enemies and avoid harm in doing so. Socrates objects that Meno lists the parts of virtue rather than what all different virtues have in common as virtues: their one form or *eidos*. Though Meno resists Socrates's effort to apply to virtue two answer-models—first of the one being (*ousia*) of the several kinds of bees, and second of the sameness of bodily characteristics (health, size, and strength) as regards men and women—Socrates does get Meno to admit that the virtues of the different kinds of human beings must be accompanied by justice and moderation. That's still two parts of virtue, however, so Socrates again asks Meno to tell him, recalling Gorgias, what virtue is as such (71e1-73c8).

Meno then says in his second answer that according to Gorgias virtue is the ability to rule human beings. The problem here is that ability to rule doesn't apply to all the different types Meno listed in his first answer, but only to a few men gifted in the art of rule. Nevertheless, Socrates again gets Meno to add justice to ruling (whereupon Meno says that justice *is* virtue), and when prompted by Socrates Meno adds to this courage, moderation, wisdom, magnificence and many others. Socrates objects again that Meno has listed the parts rather than the whole of virtue, and when Meno says that he's not yet able to find what all the virtues have in common, Socrates says "That's likely, at least," and says he'll help push Meno and himself forward.

That push comes in the form of two exemplary definitions of the "shape-ness" of different "shapes." At first Meno can't see what Socrates is getting at in seeking what makes different shapes the *same* as shapes (as practice for answering about virtue), and he orders Socrates to explain it on the promise that he'll be willing then to speak about virtue. The first exemplary definition—shape is "that which alone among the beings happens always is to accompany color"—anticipates or echoes the later argument that virtue is what is always accompanied by knowledge. But Meno rejects this model as naïve because it involves reference to what Meno says is an unknown, namely, "color." Were Meno eristic and contentious, says Socrates, he (Socrates) would just ask Meno to refute what he's advanced as true. But since they are now friends, he'll respond more "dialectically" and advance a model that is both true and also involves things the person being asked (Meno) agrees that he knows. So Socrates offers a second, geometrical, exemplary definition using nothing unknown to Meno: "shape is the limit of a solid." While understanding this definition but without paying it any mind, Meno responds aggressively (and breaking his previous promise to speak about virtue) by demanding that Socrates tell him what color is. Socrates responds that Meno is behaving in the hubristic and tyrannical manner of a spoiled beauty, but nevertheless indulges him by providing a Gorgian-Empedoclean (materialistic) account of color as "an emanation of shapes commensurate with sight," which Meno likes as the best answer Socrates has given. He likes it best, says Socrates, because it is spoken in Meno's "customary way" and because it is "tragic" (high-toned).

Socrates calls this answer inferior to the first exemplary definition that Meno had rejected as silly and says that Meno would agree (presumably with further investigations) were it not necessary for Meno to leave prior to the Mysteries into which he could be initiated (73c9-76e9).

Strauss objects to Klein's interpretation of these opening scenes, and especially to Klein's interpretation of Socrates's two objections to Meno's first definition of virtue (Klein: 47-53). The first objection is "technical" or "learned" or "methodical," says Klein. Socrates, hoping to get Meno into a learning mood, first asks him for the one *eidos* for the being (*ousia*) of the different kinds of bees. Were he asked about that, says Meno, he could say something about it. But when asked to apply the same bee-*eidos*-being notion to virtue, Meno says that he understands what Socrates means but doesn't grasp the question the way he, Meno, wants to. So Socrates then asks for the one *eidos* of health, tallness, and strength as regards men and women. Meno agrees that these qualities would be the same in men and women, but when asked then about virtue, he balks again: this isn't the same thing as the virtues of men, women, old men, children, and slaves.

Socrates's opening (technical-learned-methodical) effort has been in vain, says Klein. But if Meno is not quick "to cross the eidetic bridge Socrates has built for him, at least he does not run the danger of joining the ranks of those 'friends of the ideas,' who in their eagerness to embrace the doctrine might miss its most decisive points" (Klein: 52). Klein here refers to the Stranger's comments in *Sophist* 248a4, where the "friends," hoping to counter the materialistic doctrine of being as power (changeable) are forced on their own idealistic grounds to the view that all things are in motion and hence changeable.[viii] Meno, who is something of a culture vulture, knows about and likes technical terms such as *eidos*, but he's not got his head so high in the clouds as to conflate the ideas of body and soul. Perhaps Meno was right not to cross the bridge, and so on Meno's behalf Klein asks: "Does not human excellence belong to an order different from that of strength and tallness and health?" (That turns out to be a fundamental question in the dialogue, and the answer is not as clear as Klein seems to imply.)

Despite this nod to Meno, Klein does not think much of the lad's abilities. Socrates thus has to shift from the technical to more "habitual and familiar" talk about justice and moderation for the different people and their roles in Meno's first answer. Further belittling Meno, Klein comments that while "Meno was not willing to draw an at least plausible inference" from the technical definition models, he is now unable to see the contradiction in Socrates's conclusion regarding justice and moderation and Meno's quick agreement with it: that virtue as a whole or as a one cannot be the *two* different ways of justice and moderation. Klein then wonders if despite Meno's and Gorgias's ability to enumerate different virtues, they see no incompatibility in regarding virtue to be one and many at the same time. Or perhaps Meno doesn't see the contradiction simply because Socrates's argument about justice and moderation, says Klein, "has a familiar ring which does not tax Meno's thinking." Klein concludes: "At any rate, what the

[viii] The friends distinguished between body-perception-generating-changeable on the one hand, and soul-thought-unchanged-real-being on the other. But because of their notion of the mind's *participation* in "real being" they are forced to admit that all is changeable motion.

intricate 'technical' argument could not accomplish, the appeal to the habitually acceptable did." Meno, out of habit, finally sees that what Socrates wants for a definition of virtue as one (even if twofold) for all cases (different human roles) (Klein: 53).

The more metaphysical Klein sees the first answer in terms of Meno's familiarity with and resistance to the technical vocabulary of the friends of the ideas on the one hand, and on the other, Meno's making some little progress by Socrates's manipulation of his near brainless dependence on memory (he can't see the difference between virtue as one and virtue as many). To the first point, the more political Strauss has a simpler explanation: Meno's resistance to the "technical" objection makes perfect sense in the light of his political first definition of virtue: that each member of the household and the city has a virtue appropriate to its function and age: man, woman, child, slave, old man. Meno may not be a philosopher, but neither is he Klein's dunce: when Socrates jumps to the unity of different bees and then to the unity of health and size and strength, Meno has no problem. But when Socrates then asks him to apply this unity first to virtue, and then more specifically to virtue in a child and an elder whether woman or man and leaves out "slave," Meno sees what's coming and resists (session 3: 56). The issue here is the importance for Meno of the difference between free men (especially beautiful and rich ones) in their prime and slaves, not Meno's reluctance to cross an "eidetic bridge."

And as for Meno's swift agreement to add justice and moderation (as regards a woman and a man) to his first definition, Strauss says it has less to do with what Meno remembers and more with what he tends to forget. Meno's memory is *selective*: he forgets about justice and moderation yet when reminded of them he agrees in a heartbeat. In this respect, says Strauss, he differs from the decent Callicles in the *Gorgias*, who in defense of Socrates argues that justice is bunk (session 3: 60-62). Meno may or may not be an arch-villain, but as one at least predisposed to vice, the last thing he would do is to debunk the belief in justice that leaves his victims at his disposal (sessions 13: 295; 15: 345-46).

Klein interprets Socrates's opening gambit—that Meno recollect what Gorgias told him about virtue—to suggest that Meno may be a mere rememberer of what "somebody else" opines. This is important because "most opinions of most of us," and not just of Meno, are so acquired (Klein: 43-45). Once again, Strauss agrees as to the importance of this matter but comments that while it might indeed be true about Meno, Meno's answer to Socrates in the dialogue does not suggest that he sees himself as mere rememberer: Meno, says Strauss, "does not present himself as a Gorgian who has derived his opinion from Gorgias, but rather as a man standing on his own feet, who agrees with Gorgias. Now that is surely the case" (session 3: 46).

This issue of memory and habit comes up again in Klein's discussions of Meno's second answer, that virtue is the ability to rule human beings (Klein: 54-70). After Meno agreed that rule has to be just and Socrates asks him if justice is virtue or a certain virtue and Meno asks him what he means, Socrates uses the example of roundness as a certain shape and not shape as such. Meno sees the point and adds that as there are other shapes, so too are there other virtues. But when asked again what the virtues have in common, Meno is

stumped, and Socrates helps him by means of examples of shapes and colors; and Meno still can't get it and demands that Socrates explain shapes and shape on the promise that Meno will then then tell him about virtue as a whole. So Socrates explains that shape is what is always accompanied by color. Meno rejects that as silly and then Socrates gives the geometrical explanation, which Meno understands but ignores and then demands to know from Socrates what color is. To this demand Socrates gives his Empedoclean answer in terms of emanations and sight and perception.

Regarding the geometrical explanation, Klein explains that while Meno rejects the reference to color in defining shape, he has no problem with the abstraction "solid" in the geometrical example (shape is the limit of a solid), even though "there is hardly anything in the world less solid than a geometrical 'solid'" (Klein: 65-66). This move by Meno reflects his familiarity with the "*techne*" of geometry, says Klein, and that familiarity rests on the technical *habit* of using terms without any kind of direct perception or knowledge of their referents. The same applies to the Empedoclean (tragic) account of color: Meno likes it, says Socrates, because it was "spoken in accord with your customary way." Klein concludes that "it appears that Meno is perfectly content to hear all over again something he had heard before, to hear from somebody else what is already recorded in his memory" (Klein: 69). For Klein, the only thing Meno has going for him is his well-stuffed technical, but really just superficial, memory.

At this point in the seminar, Strauss comments that for Klein there seems to be some connection between Meno's supposed arch-villainy, his superficial attraction to technical science, his following of Gorgias, and his apparent dependence on habit (or tradition or mere memory) (session 4: 85-86). The clue to this connection, says Strauss, is the *Republic's* myth of Er: the man who practiced virtue by habit and not by means of philosophy chooses, for his second incarnation, the life of a child-eating tyrant. Meno, for his part, becomes a monster in the course of the life he's living and after he speaks with Socrates.

Klein starts his commentary with the observation that Meno's image as an arch-villain was "fixed in the minds of Plato's contemporaries" and "we, on our part, can hardly escape the impact of Xenophon's description of the peculiarly gifted man." As a consequence, "to see who Meno *in the dialogue* is and what part our preconceived image of him plays in it, we have to watch the drama closely. The question who is *this* Meno might even be a central one for our understanding of the dialogue" (Klein: 37-38). Fair enough, says Strauss, but we must not assume that the Meno of the dialogue *is* the diabolical monster portrayed by Xenophon; and as it turns out, that is exactly the implication of Klein's portrayal of Meno as a man entrapped in mere memory (session 2: 29-30).

The basic issue for Strauss turns out to be the *cause* of Meno's fate. By the halfway point in the seminar, Strauss anticipates the fundamental problem of Klein's account of Meno: assuming that knowledge is the source of virtue and that total dependence on memory (habit and fear of the law) is the source of vice, and discovering (if indeed we do) that the Meno of the dialogue is indeed a mere memory man will not by themselves explain his

eventual arch-villainy. Being a memory man may be a necessary condition for arch-villainy, but it's not the sufficient condition: after all, says Strauss, "we who are not arch-villains are mostly memory" (session 8: 172-73). Strauss then lets the cat out of the bag: Klein, says Strauss, indeed concludes that "Meno is the exemplar of the shallow man, of the man without any depth, and therefore he is a memory man in the most radical sense." Whether this interpretation is correct, says Strauss, can be judged only in the light of the action of the dialogue, properly understood. And that action is that Socrates, finding out that Meno cannot be made better by learning "in any precise sense" (that is, he can learn something), is confronted with the question of what to do with him: "leave him entirely to his own devices? Is there no advice which one could possibly give him in order not to lead a completely useless and perhaps even a completely harmful life, or is there some possibility of a good deed on the part of a fellow like Meno?" (session 8:183-84). The suggestion here seems to be that Socrates, not just Meno's being a memory man if indeed that's all he is, has something to do with what becomes of him.

In the rest of the dialogue, after Socrates says that Meno cannot stay for the Mysteries, Meno comments that he *would* stay if Socrates would say "many [Empedoclean] things of this sort." But satisfied with the high-toned account of color, Meno keeps his promise and says in his third answer that "a poet" (not referring to Gorgias) says virtue is to want and be able to acquire the noble things. Socrates gets Meno, who has not understood the poet at all, to take the good things (health, wealth, gold, silver and honors in city and offices) for the noble things, and then again gets Meno to agree that acquisition of the good things must be done with justice, moderation, and piety. Dropping piety for justice and moderation, Socrates leads Meno to admit that sometimes *not* acquiring would be virtue, and Socrates repays him with the complaint that he's given the parts of virtue rather than the whole, and hoists poor Meno on his own petard: to answer with parts without knowing the whole is to answer by referring to an unknown (77a1-79e6).

At this point, a completely perplexed Meno likens Socrates to a benumbing stingray, and offers the "lazy *logos*" that it is impossible to inquire into what we do not know. Socrates says he's familiar with this argument and offers as a counter his own "holy *logos*" taken from both men and women wise in the divine things: "all those among both priests and priestesses who've been concerned with being able to give an account of the matters in their purview." Meno is eager to hear about this account, so Socrates relates the famous story of recollection. These wise divines say that the human soul is immortal and that those souls who die come into being once again but never perish. Therefore, they assert that one should live as piously as possible and make atonement so as to earn from the goddess Persephone greatness in a second life and immortal reputation among human beings (79e7-81c4).

Immediately dropping the possibility of living piously, Socrates explains that since the soul is immortal there isn't anything it hasn't learned, so that learning in this life is but remembering what we already know. Meno agrees to proceed on the grounds of Socrates's *trust* that the recollection story is true, but then asks Socrates to teach him how it is. Socrates calls him a rascal for trying to trick him into a contradiction (since according to the story putting knowledge into the soul of another is unnecessary and

perhaps impossible), and Meno protests: "No, by Zeus, Socrates, I didn't speak with an eye to that but from customary habit." Socrates agrees to *show* him how the story is true, which he does by the famous scene of his teaching Meno's young slave—by a series of (leading) questions and answers—to solve a problem of geometry (the solution of which turns out to be a line whose length would be an irrational number).

Socrates convinces Meno (albeit dubiously) that he merely helped the slave to recollect opinions he must have learned prior to his life and asks Meno that "if the truth about the beings is always present for us in the soul, would the soul be immortal such that, with respect to what you now happen not to know—and this is what you don't remember—you should be confident in attempting to inquire into it and recollect it?" Meno says that Socrates speaks well, although he doesn't quite know how; and then, turning on a dime (86b6), Socrates says he won't insist much on the argument about recollection and asserts that he would do battle in speech and in deed in support of supposing that inquiring into things we do not know will make one "better and more manly and less lazy" than if we suppose that learning is impossible. Meno approves, but then, when Socrates suggests that being of one mind they investigate in common what virtue is, Meno again asks about whether virtue is teachable or whether it comes to human beings by nature or in some other way (81c5-86d2).

Socrates responds that if he ruled not just himself but also Meno, he would stick to the question of what virtue is before questioning if it can be taught. But since Meno doesn't even try to rule himself so that he can attempt to and does rule Socrates, Socrates says that it seems necessary to do what Meno asks. By a clever geometrical device, however, Socrates steers Meno back to the question of just what virtue is: What sort of soul-thing must virtue be in order for it to be or not to be teachable? In a series of ambiguous moves, Socrates very quickly gets Meno to assert that it is nobly spoken to say that virtue is prudence (no mention of piety), in whole or in part. And then Meno agrees that one acquires virtue (prudence or knowledge) by being taught and not by nature. Having made this remarkable progress, however, Socrates pulls the rug out from under Meno's feet: he's not sure, says Socrates, that virtue is teachable because though he inquired often as to whether there are any teachers of virtue, he has been unable to discover any yet (86d3-89e9).

At this point, Meno's guest-friend Anytus appears and sits down, and Socrates cleverly drops his line of argument in order to draw Anytus into the conversation. After praising Anytus's father as a self-made but modest rich man, Socrates tells Anytus what seems to be a lie: that Meno had for a long time been telling Socrates that he "desires that wisdom and virtue by means of which human beings nobly manage both households and cities and tend to their parents and know how both to receive and to send off citizens and guest friends in a manner worthy of a good man" (89e9-91a6). Although it does smack of Meno's first answer, Meno makes no objection to this false and less than grand description, as more like common decency, of what he supposedly desires. And more importantly, Meno never admitted that he lacked virtue and needed the wisdom to acquire it.

Socrates then asks Anytus to whom they should send Meno to acquire this wisdom and virtue and then shocks him by saying that it should be to the sophists, such as Protagoras who made a fortune teaching virtue. And when Anytus, who thinks that any Athenian gentleman is a teacher of virtue, explodes, Socrates makes matters even worse by getting him to admit that the most famous Athenian statesmen (Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides) were unable to teach their own sons what they knew, from which Socrates draws the conclusion that virtue cannot be taught. After threatening Socrates with harm, Anytus withdraws from the conversation but not from the scene. Turning then to Meno, Socrates asks him if the noble and good men of Thessaly think virtue is teachable. Meno replies that while some do, others do not; and as for the sophists, he says that he admires Gorgias for ridiculing their claim to be teachers of virtue: Meno finds himself, he says, in the position of the many (what an admission on his part) since he sometimes thinks that the sophists can teach virtue but sometimes thinks that they cannot (91b7-95c8).

On the authority of the poet Theognis, Socrates gets Meno to agree that since there are no teachers or students of virtue, virtue cannot be taught, at which point a thoroughly crestfallen Meno says: "I really do wonder, Socrates, whether there aren't any good men at all, or [if there are] in what way they become good" (95c9-96d4).

From this extraordinary moment, where Meno for the first time doubts his own virtue, the dialogue almost hurtles to its conclusion. Socrates consoles Meno by saying that human affairs are advantageously guided not only by knowledge but also by correct opinion. One who has a correct opinion of the way to Larissa will do just as well as one who has knowledge of that way: "he'll be no worse a guide—even though he supposes what is true and has no prudent knowledge of it—than one who does have prudent knowledge of this." To Socrates's claim that correct opinion is no less advantageous than knowledge, Meno again wonders (remarkably) "this being so, why in the world knowledge is more honored than correct opinion, and on account of what one differs from the other." Here's why you wonder, says Socrates: Perhaps you don't have statues of Daedalus in Thessaly, and correct opinions ("these things") are like Daedalus's statues and runaway slaves unless they are tied down by means of "a calculation of cause," by which they become knowledge. This is recollection, says Socrates, but again he's "just conjecturing" about that: what he's not conjecturing about and will assert that he knows is that correct opinion is something different from knowledge. And Meno *agrees* (96d5-98b6).

Having rehabilitated knowledge for Meno, Socrates yanks the rug again: he repeats loosely (and for Meno, surely dizzyingly) the course of the argument about the equal advantageousness of true opinion and knowledge. They are not had by nature, so Socrates and Meno examined if virtue, which is prudence, was something teachable; but since there are no students or teachers of virtue it is neither something teachable nor prudence. It's advantageous and good, however, and the only things that guide correctly are true opinion and knowledge; but since it isn't something teachable, virtue no longer comes to be through knowledge. Knowledge would *not* be a guide in political action. And Meno *agrees* (98b7-99b4).

The great statesmen of whom Anytus spoke guided the cities "not through a certain wisdom nor because they were wise," but rather by good opinion,[ix] and thus they could not make others such as themselves. In this respect, they are no different as regards prudence than soothsayers and divine prophets who say true things while inspired but "know nothing of what they say." We would correctly call these men divine, and we would correctly call divine soothsayers and prophets and poets. The political men are above all these, both divine and inspired, being breathed on and possessed by the god when they succeed by speaking while "knowing nothing of what they say."[x] Women and Lacedaemonians call good men divine. Meno agrees, and opines that perhaps Socrates is annoying Anytus (by Socrates's agreement with the hated Spartans). Socrates doesn't care and says they'll converse with Anytus another time. Socrates then concludes: so virtue is had neither by nature nor by teaching, but "by divine allotment without intellect," *unless* there is a sort of political man who can teach political skill to another. That man would be, as Homer said of Teiresias among the dead: he alone "in possession of his senses." Meno then comments that Socrates speaks beautifully. Socrates repeats that on the basis of "this calculation" virtue comes by divine allotment but says that they'll have clear knowledge of the matter only when they inquire into what virtue is, "itself by itself." Socrates has to be off, and closes by asking Meno to persuade his guest-friend Anytus of what he (Meno) has been persuaded, so that Anytus "may be gentler. If you do persuade him, there is a certain benefit you'll render to the Athenians as well" (99b5-100c2).

In his account of these scenes of the dialogue, Strauss makes it clear that Klein is much too hard on Meno's ability and character (sessions 9: 192-93; 11: 239-40). According to Strauss the dialogue peaks at the point where Socrates tells Meno the recollection story that culminates in two possibilities: given the immortality of the soul, one should live piously and repentantly in this life in order after death to get favorable divine judgment and so be reborn to greatness and immortal reputation; or given the immortality of the soul, learning is remembering and so possible. Piety having been dropped, Meno appears stubbornly to ask Socrates to teach him how the latter is true and when Socrates chides him for being a trickster, Meno explains sincerely that it's just his habit to ask to be taught. Then after the slave scene, which "proves" that the recollection story is true, Socrates says that while he won't insist on the recollection story he will fight in word and deed for the view that inquiring into what we don't know makes us manlier and less lazy. Meno agrees that they should inquire together into what virtue is but says again that he would rather examine and hear about whether it can be taught (86b1-d2).

Klein takes this last move by Meno to unveil Meno's soul as "a man unwilling to learn and incapable of learning," whose soul is nothing but deranged memory; he lacks any depth and is thus a "shrunken soul" (*psycharion*) and a man who will stop at nothing (Klein: 184-86). But Strauss objects that Meno has indeed learned something: the slave scene showed him that the slave could learn something without first asking the "what is" question ("What is geometry?"), and it showed Meno that Socrates could lead him (by teaching) to an answer (session 9: 188). In this respect, Meno's request that he examine

[ix] Or "good repute."

[x] Socrates repeats this phrase practically verbatim: 99c3-5 and 99d4-5.

with Socrates, and hear if virtue can be taught, makes perfect sense. Meno can learn *something*, and, we could add, he's not *completely* unaware of who he is: he says he didn't try to trick Socrates but rather acted out of habit (session 7:149-50). To know one acted out of habit is not to be completely in its grasp. And for a moment at least, Socrates gets Meno to agree that virtue must be knowledge, or prudence, thus turning him away for a moment from his teacher Gorgias, whom he has doubted all along. And there's more: when Socrates pulls the rug out from under Meno's conclusion that virtue is knowledge, Meno despairs that there might be no good men at all; and in the right opinion by divine allotment scene that follows, Meno for a moment defends the superiority of knowledge to right opinion. Of all this Strauss comments: "I'm not so displeased with Meno's progress as Mr. Klein is. It is surely not wonderful progress, but it is quite remarkable for a man like him." Strauss follows this up by saying that Meno "has understood something of the difference between knowledge and right opinion. In a hazy way, perhaps, he knows there is a difference between 'I know' and 'I'm sure of.'" "Hazy way," says Strauss, not "precisely" (he learns something, though no philosopher) (session 11: 260-61).

Strauss remarks that the term "shrunken soul" doesn't appear in the *Meno*, and attributing it to Meno distorts the lad's character. We cannot easily say, Strauss concludes, that Meno is *outstanding* in his inability to learn (not worse than Crito or Callicles) (session 15: 343-45). When Meno accosts Socrates, he surely thinks he's virtuous and "knows" what it is, but he really worries about the fact that, apparently, he never learned through teaching what he knows (at least not from Gorgias, who would have taught him only how to speak well). And in the final scene, when Socrates brings up the possibility of a Teiresias who can teach statesmanship to others, Meno replies that Socrates speaks beautifully.[xi] Of this, Strauss says that by the dialogue's end, Meno has been tamed and even gentled (at least temporarily) by Socrates. That frame of mind doesn't fit Klein's image of a Meno having no depth of soul at all (session 12: 281-82).

Now this doesn't mean that for Strauss Meno is a saint: he lacks self-control (session 9: 189); he is most certainly unwilling and barely able to devote himself to learning (sessions 6: 129; 15: 346-47); and he has a "proclivity" to vice as disclosed by his tendency to forget about justice in his first two answers (sessions 3: 59, 62; 4: 66, 69-70, 72; 5: 95, 111; 6: 115, 117; 8: 182; 9: 188; 12: 282;15: 345-46;16: 351), and the ease with which he identifies the noble with material goods while also forgetting about justice in his third answer (sessions 5: 103; 6: 115; 9: 205). But at the time of his conversation with Socrates, he is not the arch-villain portrayed by Xenophon and Klein. Strauss emphasizes this latter point by a subtle comment on the third instance of Socrates's having to remind Meno about justice. When Socrates asks of Meno "if it makes no difference" to him whether gold, silver, and honors and offices are obtained unjustly, Meno replies "doubtless no" and that without justice or moderation or piety or some other part of virtue obtaining the good things "could not be virtue." Of this, Strauss comments: "You see, like a very nice British public school boy. . . so that is a wonderfully easy man to handle, it seems. He doesn't have very strong convictions in favor of vice" (session 6:116-17).

[xi] All this despite the fact that "the theoretical premise" of Meno's life is that learning is impossible (session 6: 129-32).

(It's here that Strauss comments that Meno is humorless and no lover of pleasure.) Strauss has a complicated view of Meno's soul: On the one hand he's not simply an arch-villain—and more like a schoolboy, even though he makes the really villainous calculation about ripping off his friends; but on the other hand his desire to be great, coupled with his confusing of the noble and the good, and Socrates's indifferent treatment of the lad, makes him an arch-villain. The problem of Klein's interpretation for Strauss is that it completely ignores and obscures the most important question: Is the proximate cause of Meno's eventual arch-villainy his propensity to vice or that *and* his conversation with Socrates and Anytus? (session 15: 345-46).

Throughout the seminar, Strauss argues that Socrates's dialogical comportment toward Meno is a mixed bag. On the one hand, by playing off Meno's *worry* about his virtue Socrates tames him enough to ask him with a straight face to tame his guest-friend Anytus. On the other hand, in the scene with Anytus Socrates debunks the authority of the Athenian and Thessalian gentlemen and tradition: the *sophists* come out better than do they (session 10: 234). Moreover, here and later with Meno Socrates blurs the difference between teaching the virtues of statesmanship and teaching common decency. Bad enough to argue to Anytus that statesmanship can't be taught; to say this of common decency is even worse. And when in the recollection scene Socrates presents the two alternatives of piety and learning, he drops piety (as he does on every other occasion that piety comes up), saying nary a word (sessions 5: 111; 6: 115, 131-32; 7: 139-40; 8: 183; 9: 188-92, 199; 10: 220; 12: 283-84). Thus, in front of his eventual accuser Anytus, says Strauss, Socrates corrupts Meno, as he was said at the trial to have corrupted the young of Athens in general. After the final overturning of knowledge as the anchor of right opinion, the gods come back at the end as the dispensers of correct but non-rational opinions. For Strauss this situation leaves Meno and everyone but the divinely chosen in a pickle: What are the unlucky ones to do? Imitate the divinely chosen? Impossible. Obey them? How will they know who they are? (sessions 12: 284-85; 13: 292-94; 15: 346-47). (This is one of two remarks by Strauss suggesting that Socrates cared *only* for himself and his kind.)

For whatever reason, rather than turn Meno over to the care of "respectable prejudice" or to law, Socrates leaves Meno to his own devices and the company of Anytus when he, Socrates, hurries off to where he's got to be (session 10: 234-35). We're left to wonder how Meno got to be the arch-villain, which Strauss in the seminar's last session says is perhaps someone "who believes what is commonly called villainy is in fact virtue" (session 16: 350-51). More than once Strauss comments in the seminar that the differences among prudence, wisdom, and knowledge, and between the noble (virtue) and the material good things (Meno is easily drawn to equate them all), and between common decency and the virtue of statesmen, get blurred. As Xenophon tells us in his description of Meno the arch-villain: "He thought he *deserved* [xii] to be honored and tended to because he showed that he had the power and the willingness to commit the greatest injustices." Even in his arch-villainy, then, Meno somehow still cared for virtue.

[xii] *Anabasis* 2. 6. 26 (*exiou*). Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno*, 154. The emphasis is mine.

Two things come to mind in comparing Strauss's and Klein's approach to the *Meno*. First, one who thinks metaphysics and ontology "fundamental" may be inclined, however aware of the need to watch the drama carefully, to survey a dialogue or even dialogues broadly in order to derive abstract conclusions, say, about memory and recollection. That seems to be what Strauss thinks Klein has done. And to the contrary, one who thinks that political philosophy is "fundamental" may pay closer attention to ordinary human motivations, such as Meno's concern for status and worry that he's not been taught virtue and so may have none, and be on the watch not so much for abstractions as for those obvious and concrete things from which a dialogue "abstracts" or leaves out. That seems to be what Strauss has tried to do. The *Meno*, Strauss tells us, abstracts from two things: law (the word never occurs in the dialogue); and in the case of the Athenian political greats, nature, by which Strauss means the differences among human natures (sessions 10: 235-36; 13: 291-95; 16: 365-66). Socrates's "proof" that virtue can't be taught, since the Athenian statesmen and gentlemen could not teach their sons to be as they themselves were, ignores the possibility that these sons were not chips off the original blocks. That was true of Socrates's own children. The abstraction from law reminds us that Meno can't control himself, and since he comes from Thessaly[xiii] he can't be controlled by others, with the one exception perhaps of his treatment at the hands of Socrates (sessions 2: 35; 3: 40; 8: 183; 15: 345-47; 16: 352-53). The problem with the exception, of course, is that Meno doesn't stick around (session 12: 284-85).

Both abstractions taken together remind us that Socrates's relentless pursuit of virtue as such—the one thing all different virtues are—may, as Strauss seems to suggest, illuminate its opposite: that human beings may differ in kind and so be virtuous in fundamentally different ways. At least in the *Meno* we see that Socrates's apparent extremism in claiming that the unexamined life is not worth living can be dangerous for practical affairs. It is no accident that in the seminar the only reference Strauss makes to his published work is to *The City and Man*, where he describes Aristotle's discovery of "moral virtue," according to which "a given habit [of *gentlemen*] is regarded as praiseworthy without investigating why this is so." For Plato, "what Aristotle calls moral virtue is a kind of halfway house between political or vulgar virtue which is in the service of bodily well-being (of self-preservation or peace) and genuine virtue which, to say the least, animates only the philosophers as philosophers."[xiv] Plato's judgment notwithstanding, Meno, Strauss suggests, could have used such moral lodging (session 13: 292-94).

The other thing that comes to mind is that one who thinks metaphysics and ontology fundamental may presume that these pursuits can stand on their own rational feet despite the challenge of irrational faith. This issue comes up with Strauss's comments on Klein's long and complicated reflections on Plato's use of myths in the *Meno* and in the dialogues as a whole (Klein:108-172). Klein argues that whenever Plato refers to recollection and memory (together), he means for these terms to "acquire mythical dimensions" or to be tied to a "mythical frame," since recollection and memory occur both during and after our journey to the super heavenly place (Klein: 108, 137, 152-57).

[xiii] See *Crito* 53d1-54b1.

[xiv] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 25-27.

Strauss points out in this regard that in the *Phaedo* and the *Meno* the issue of recollection has to do with the immortality of the soul (session 15: 334-36). The crucial issue for Strauss is Klein's comment that Plato avoids "an argumentative examination of the recollection thesis itself." That's because as a myth it "precludes any didactic account of its validity" (Klein: 168-72). To this, Strauss responds that the Platonic dialogues as a whole supply us with material for such a discussion: "to state in non-mythical language . . . what Socrates would fight for in earnest" (that learning makes us better). To *prove*, that is, that learning, and hence our betterment, requires no recourse to an immortal soul. Klein's position, says Strauss, is that "every speech about the highest and the whole, the most comprehensive, is inadequate. And therefore an argumentation can never sufficiently settle it. The highest and the whole transcend every speech, whether it is argumentative speech—*logos*—or mythical speech—*mythos*." The "highest and the whole" of which Strauss speaks is, of course, the heavenly place where the immortal soul learned all that it later recollects, and where it goes after the body dies.

Strauss comments that for Klein myths, which use images that are plausible but "cannot be literally true," unlike argumentative speech affect our actions rather than our *logos*. But what, asks Strauss, can it mean for Klein then to say that "it is not a matter of chance or of some particular historical development that myths, at all times and in all lands, are found transposed into, or embodied by, or enacted in rituals, ceremonies, customs, presentations, tragedies, all of which cannot exist unless we have a stake and a share in them"? (Klein: 169-71). Asks Strauss: Would Klein not have had to engage in an "argumentative examination of the biblical tradition [miraculous events presented as *true*][xv] which would then justify this assertion?" The issue becomes more pointed for Strauss when Klein says that Socrates dismisses as "boorish wisdom" any attempt to prove the fantastic things in myths to be impossible or contrary to nature. In reply, Strauss refers to "a case discussed by some other classical philosophers": the need for a general to use such boorish wisdom to calm troops panicked by an eclipse of the moon. Strauss here seems to imply that the wisdom in question (natural philosophy), while not sufficient in itself to settle the question of fantastic things, can be supplemented by consideration of the most important practical and moral matters (session 15: 335-43).

Klein says that Socrates uses the fantastic myth as a mirror to his soul: the question isn't "Are Centaurs real?" but "Am I a Centaur?" Socrates manipulates such myths so as to find their "truth" not in words but rather in the reactions they provoke from himself and others. The problem with this for Strauss is that in the *Meno* Socrates doesn't tell the recollection story to see into himself, and the only example that might plausibly fit this description is Klein's likening of the *Phaedo* to a "mythological mime," in which Socrates as a new Theseus defeats the true Minotaur: the fear of death (Klein: 126). But in the *Phaedo*, objects Strauss, the doctrine of recollection is used by Socrates later to prove the immortality of the soul to his grieving friends, for which reason alone he would not and did not present the doctrine as a myth but rather as something that can be demonstrated (or refuted). (Imagine saying to a dying and frightened man: Don't worry, you're going to a *mythical* place where you'll fly around forever.) The doctrine of recollection in the *Phaedo* is not a myth; if Socrates did not really think it valid, says

[xv] Bracketed phrase is the editor's.

Strauss, it would be rather an "exoteric teaching" that appeals to what people really do think, or can be made to think, is true. Klein, says Strauss, never raises the issue of the difference between a myth and an exoteric teaching.[xvi] The esoteric flip-side of such a teaching would help one see that what we want to see proved exoterically (immortality as our just deserts) isn't *really* what it's cracked up to be (session 15: 337, 339).

According to Klein in some of the densest pages of his book, the logical and mythical speeches of the *Phaedo* are joint "incantations" intended to "charm away" fear of the "bugbear Death." The evidence for these speeches springs not from their reasonableness but from their practical effects: the drama of Socrates's "adult sobriety, the serenity in gravity and jest" in the face of death. The "brave assertion of the soul's departure becomes a manifestation of human excellence," and that excellence "itself demands that the effort of the *dianoia* be kept up, that the logos continue." Says Klein: "the indestructible 'part' of Socrates, in whatever guise . . . may well be 'present' whenever the search is undertaken. This 'presence' may not even require any visible manifestation at all. Is it not secured by the very effort to keep the logos alive?" (Klein: 147-149). All this seems to add up to the view that philosophy as a way of life justifies itself by *assertion,* and as a consequence argument and myth move hand-in-hand as joint partners in soul-rhetoric. The ultimate issue seems to be that for Klein philosophy is a choice or a commitment: as if that could silence the call of piety as the true alternative to philosophy. Strauss seems to think that Klein's view of the ineffable highest and whole frees philosophy to justify itself by what it can make itself do rather than by effecting a reasoned change of mind.

To return to poor Meno: When Socrates says that Meno's lazy argument is not nobly stated and Meno asks why not, Socrates replies that he has "heard from both men and women wise in the divine matters." At this point either Socrates pauses or Meno interrupts. Whichever it is, Meno seems ardent in his interest: "Stating what account?" And when Socrates teases with "What's true, in my opinion, at least, and noble," Meno presses with: "What is this account and who are the ones saying it?" These turn out to be "those among both the priests and priestesses who've been concerned with being able to give an account of the matters in their purview" (81a5-b2). Although Meno may just be acting as a culture vulture would, it is plausible to suspect[xvii] that Meno seems eager to hear about the gods, which makes Socrates's quick move in the recollection story from piety to learning, and his indifference to piety in general, difficult to understand. In the same vein, Socrates doesn't follow up Meno's apparent willingness to stay and be initiated into the Mysteries if Socrates will tell him more Empedoclean things (76 e6-

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[xvi] In answer to a student's question, Strauss says that Klein thought Socrates's argument about the soul in the *Phaedo* was not just a bad proof but was not meant to be a proof at all (session 15: 342-43). Strauss says he sees what Klein "means" and that a "comforting speech is not necessarily a true speech." But for Strauss it cannot be a myth because of the "question of piety as piety" in the *Meno*. No one, and not just Meno, would become pious after having been told an *admitted* myth about the immortality of the soul: as regards effects, such a myth would be self-defeating. But considering the stakes involved, the truth or falsity of the immortal soul is no less exoterically pressing for the philosopher than it could be for Meno—or Anytus, for that matter.

[xvii] See Bartlett, *Protagoras and Meno,* 144-45.

77a2). (Empedocles, we should recall, claimed that the wise could achieve eternal happiness.) And in the same light, by the dialogue's end the gods allot "good opinion" or "reputation" to Anytus's political men who then "succeed by speaking about many great matters, though they know nothing of what they say." Strauss points out that the brilliant Themistocles as well as Meno was a traitor to the Greeks (session 15: 346). These gods, then, apparently bestow the speaking gifts without regard for any prior common decency. They could be taken as immortal versions of Gorgias. Meno's concern for the gods could have something to do with his beauty: such a one knows more vividly than the plain what it means that beauty fades. Still, why does Socrates not urge Meno to a life of pious supplication and atonement, to the traditional worship of the gods, as the means to an immortal glory he must surely want? Perhaps because Socrates sees what Meno would do to deserve the favor of the gods: pursue the material good things while taking them to be the noble ones. That is what the allotment gods of the dialogue's end, who bestow their favors without regard for common decency, would not seem to mind.[xviii]

Strauss doesn't flinch from wondering at Socrates's near recklessness in the *Meno*, at one point asking if Socrates, who leaves Meno gentled momentarily but also resource-less for the future, is "entirely indifferent" to the fate of most men, which would of course include Meno (session 12: 283-84). He wonders even more at the insulting, aggressive and infuriating stance Socrates takes toward Anytus. At the dialogue's end, Socrates says he doesn't care that Anytus is annoyed by his description of the allotment gods. Socrates and Meno had been conversing the day before, and Anytus, the guest friend with whom Meno was lodging, could well have known about that fact. Could it be that the dialogue is not quite so involuntary as it seems: that Socrates prepared the way for Meno's assault with an eye to enticing Anytus to follow? Socrates does seem to do his best when Anytus first sits down not to drive him away. No wonder Strauss asks, of Socrates's debunking of the Athenian gentlemen: "Does he wish to die?" (session 10: 235). The answer seems a simple "yes," for Socrates cannot have thought Meno would long be tamed and then tame Anytus.[xix] At the end of his life Meno was as confused about virtue as he was when he conversed with Socrates: you can't get all the gold, silver, honors, and offices without deserving them, which is just what Xenophon says the arch villain, who thought unrestrained might makes right, thought of himself.

[xviii] See session 6: 131-32.
[xix] See Strauss's 1938 remark to Klein, *Gesammelte Schriften*, bd. 3, 561-63.

Note on the Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on natural right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Strauss's colleague Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This project received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward but did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer."

In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director, Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker of the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor
August 2014

Editorial Headnote

The course was taught in a seminar form. Strauss began class with general remarks, a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The texts assigned for this course were Plato's *Meno*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Loeb Classical Library edition) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), and Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's* Meno (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965). Original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

This transcript is based upon existing audiofiles of the course. The course had sixteen sessions, and audiotapes for all sessions have survived. Portiosn of the audiofile were,

however, inaudible, which is indicated in the transcript with ellipses. Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted, but noted in the endnotes. Footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

The transcript was edited by Jerry Weinberger, with assistance from Alex Orwin and Roger Waite.

Session 1: no date

Leo Strauss: This course is devoted to an introduction to political philosophy. And the introduction will be given in the form of an interpretation of the Platonic dialogue called the *Meno*. I have therefore to do first four things—I have to explain four things. First, what is political philosophy? Second, why do we need an introduction to political philosophy? Third point, why does this introduction take the form of an interpretation of a Platonic dialogue? And last, why did I choose the *Meno*?

I begin at the beginning. What is political philosophy? And a very simple reflection suffices to explain what political philosophy means. All political action is concerned with either preservation or change. When it is concerned with change it is concerned with change for the better. When it is concerned with preservation, it is concerned with avoiding[1] [change for the worse]. Therefore all political action presupposes opinions of better and worse. But you cannot have an opinion of better and worse without having an opinion of good or bad. But when you see that you follow an opinion, you are by this very fact driven to try to find knowledge, to replace opinion by knowledge. Therefore all political action points by itself toward knowledge of the good. Now the complete political good we call the good society, and therefore all political action points to the question of the good society. And political philosophy can be defined as the quest for the good society. Today there are quite a few people who are doubtful whether one can speak of the good society, because that would imply that there is a common good; and for some reason they think [that] there couldn't be a common good. But quite a few of these people speak, for example, of the great society, which is another form of the good society, only one doesn't know why "great society" is preferable to good society—at least it has not been explained to us. And others speak of the open society, which is also a form of the good society, and again we are not told why the open society is a better term than the good society. Be this as it may, one can only verbally reject the quest for the good society. And this is the concern of political philosophy.

Now I have to correct myself immediately. While this reasoning which I sketched seems to be evident to the meanest capacities, its value, its power to convince has decayed in modern times.[2] And this fact makes it necessary [for us] to engage in an introduction to political philosophy. Now the reasoning justifying, legitimating political philosophy has lost its power to convince for the following reasons: political philosophy is today regarded by many people, especially in the academic professions, as impossible on two different but related grounds, which we indicate by the words "science" and "history." I'll speak first of science. The view which asserts that political philosophy is impossible because of science, with a view to science, we may call positivism. According to this view, the only form of genuine knowledge is scientific knowledge, and scientific knowledge cannot say anything about the good society because science knows only facts, or relations of facts, or laws regarding facts; and it cannot distinguish between true and untrue values, between sound and unsound values. The distinction between facts and values is a characteristic feature of positivism as we know it today. Now let me illustrate it by an example. Tocqueville in his famous book on democracy in America seems to say,

at least at first glance, that the case for democracy is in itself not stronger than the case for aristocracy. Democracy has its particular virtues and vices and so has aristocracy. But, Tocqueville continues, Providence has decided in favor of democracy. Practically, there is no longer a choice. We have to make the best of democracy; we cannot have a romantic longing for aristocracy. Now what Tocqueville understands by Providence is now called by most people who speak in these terms History, with a capital "H." History has decided in favor of democracy.

Now in the first decade of this century, a famous student of society, Max Weber, argued against Tocqueville and other people of this kind as follows: One cannot pass the responsibility to history. We do not know the future and we cannot know it, one reason being [that] what the future will be depends very much on our decisions. History is not inevitable.[i] So if we reconsider the difficulty discussed by Tocqueville, we must leave it at the unresolved and unsoluble conflict, say, between democracy and aristocracy. A case can be made for each of these alternatives, and each of us has to make his own decision. What Max Weber implied, but never said clearly enough, is [that] one cannot make a case for everything; one can only make a case for some things which are respectable. One cannot make a case for any whim. In post-Weberian social science as we have it today, this Weberian view, which was still a qualified "quote relativism unquote" has become an unqualified relativism. No case can be made for any values. Values are non-rational preferences. Arguments are mere "quote rationalizations unquote." Now you, I suppose, are all familiar with this position because it is the reigning view in the profession and you will hear it even in high school, if my information is correct. Now it would seem to be a rational demand that we have to see whether there is not a case for democracy, a rational argument in favor of democracy; and we have to state this case (if we can, of course) at its highest level, excluding all ideologies. But you would also have to learn to state the case for the alternative to democracy so that we are in a position to judge and to state this at its highest level. For all practical purposes, this would mean that we have to know Plato and Aristotle and to study them to hear the case for aristocracy[3] so that we can contrast it with the case for democracy. But this only in passing.

The difficulty to which this positivism or, as one can also say, social science relativism, is exposed can be seen more simply if one raises this question: What is a value? After all, when you talk so much about facts and values you must know what a value is. This is obviously a factual question, not a value question according to the ordinary understanding. But if we attempt to answer this question, What is a value?, we would see that it is at the same time a value question. For example, if you say [that] a value is every object of desire, which is a very popular answer, then indeed every possible object of desire is a value. But if you take a somewhat more complicated case, that someone has a desire for something, say, for smoking, but he disapproves of it, is smoking his value? Is not what he considerately and deliberately approves or disapproves much more a value? What a man chooses deliberately, is this not much more a value than a mere object of desire, a mere opinion? Now in the latter case, if a value is the object of choice as distinguished from mere desire, quite a few things would never be values which would be

[i] See *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: The Free Press), 22-23 ("The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality").

values if value is taken to be any object of desire. So you define the range of values, you make a value judgment by your answer to this apparently merely factual question: What is a value?

I will not go into the other difficulties to which this position is exposed; I will only state some of them to see why we must not take it for granted. The fact-value distinction is in itself a part of a larger issue. This distinction is unknown to the citizen as citizen, to what we may call[4] the commonsense understanding of political things. For the commonsense understanding, the judgment that, say, President Johnson is a very clever man (value judgment) and the judgment that he is six feet or so high are of the same status: you can find it out by the same way of looking at it. And also whether his policy is wise: it is a bit more complicated, but this [is] another value judgment [that] can be established in the same way as anything merely factual. So for common sense, the distinction between facts and values doesn't exist. But according to the now-reigning view, in the moment we turn to a scientific understanding of politics we must make this fundamental distinction between facts and values. But scientific understanding is preceded by commonsense understanding, as everyone will admit. But we must add one point which is not always made: This dependence of scientific understanding on commonsense understanding can never be gotten rid of, however much social science might proceed. The very simplest example which I always have used (and I apologize to those of you who have heard it): when you are sent out by a sociology department, or maybe a political science department, to find out the opinions of people on whatever the subject may be, they tell you many, many things, but they don't tell you that you should only ask human beings for their opinion. Still less do they tell you how to tell a human being from a dog or from a tree. Now how do you know how to tell a human being from a non-human being? I don't know, but surely you haven't learned it in classrooms. You know it in a prescientific way, a way which is very dark but which is very reliable. [Laughter] There are very few cases where you have any doubt whether you are talking to a human being or not. Now this commonsense understanding, which precedes science, can never be completely transformed. It can in the decisive respect never be transformed into scientific knowledge. This, by the way, will be the theme of this course, as you will see in a few hours.

Now let me give you a very general description of the alternative to positivism which is today so powerful, and which also rejects political philosophy. I call it historicism, obviously a derivative from the word "history." Now what is this? Its thesis can be stated as follows: All human thought, including scientific thought, rests ultimately on premises which cannot be validated by human reason and which change from historical epoch to historical epoch. The clearest presentation of this view in the English language which I know is that by Collingwood in his autobiography.[ii] He speaks there of what he calls absolute presupposition: that all human thought rests ultimately on absolute presuppositions, which differ from historical epoch to historical epoch and which are not susceptible of being validated.

[ii] R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (1939).

Now I must explain this as far as it affects in a general way the understanding of what political philosophy is about. Political philosophy appeared to us to be the quest for *the* good society. All political philosophers have tried to give answers to that, but as we see when we begin to study them or even to read them, they have given a great variety of answers. So we have a simple and clear question, and are confronted with a chaos of answers. To take one simple case, if you ask Aristotle what the good society is he will give you a very different answer from what Locke gives you. And which is the true answer? Now this question, one can say, was faced for the first time in this form by Hegel about a hundred[5] forty years ago. Now Hegel's answer is this. If you look at this variety of answers you will see that there is no chaos at all but order and necessity. Aristotle and Locke give different answers, incompatible answers, yes, undoubtedly. But why do they give different answers? The answer: Aristotle was a Greek and Locke was an Englishman of the seventeenth century. Stated generally, the doctrines are a function of the times, of the epochs, and by this simple observation the chaos disappears. Today this has become so trivial that many textbooks are written from this point of view, and I think you get this with your mothers' milk as babies, but it was once a great change in orientation.

There is, however, one great difficulty. If doctrines are functions of time, there cannot be *the* political philosophy. And in particular, Hegel has no right to present his political philosophy as *the* political philosophy but only the political philosophy for the time being—which Hegel did not do. And Hegel had this apparently paradoxical justification. Hegel assumed that there is an absolute time, an absolute moment, incomparable with all other times; and Hegel's political philosophy belongs to that absolute moment, and therefore it is *the* final political philosophy. Hegel could therefore say (and that is implied already in what I said) [that] the historical process is a rational process, and therefore it must be a finite and completed process. Because if it were not completed, you can't know what will happen afterward; maybe it looks very rational up to now, and then it ends in a terrible disaster and it would not be simply a rational process. Now to quote another formulation of Hegel: "the individual is the son of his time"[iii]; and that means even the most reflective, the most unprejudiced, the most philosophic individual is nevertheless the son of his time, and therefore what he will say is bound to be dated sooner or later.

Now after Hegel—and now I come to historicism—the following view prevailed. The historical process is not completed. This seems to be very commonsensical. There are so many problems to solve, theoretical and practical, at all times. And hence it is not rational. And yet it remains true that the individual is the son of his time. So we are dependent in our thought on certain fundamental premises belonging to our time or epoch or culture, however you call it, and yet these principles cannot claim to possess universal or eternal validity. Again, this has become very trivialized and every one of you will know it from high school at the latest. Political philosophy according to this view must deal with the ideals of our time or of our society. To raise the question whether these ideals of our time or of our society are the true ideals is impossible and therefore forbidden. Political philosophy cannot go beyond, cannot question those ideals which are in fact accepted.

[iii] *Philosophy of Right*, preface. See Sir Francis Bacon, *Novum organum* 1:84.

I will not even dream of making any criticism of this position. I will turn only to another practical consequence of historicism. Historicism can be said to say that while political philosophy is impossible—if we take the word political philosophy in any strict sense, not in the sense of which people speak of the philosophy of the man who says: It is my philosophy to take two eggs for breakfast. I have heard of such utterances. Now if we take it in any serious sense, then they say [that] political philosophy is impossible. Yet while political philosophy is impossible, the history of political philosophy—the *history* of political philosophy is possible and even necessary. This is [6]a point which I believe you also know—if from no other source, at least from the announcement of the courses of political science departments—that this is a perfectly acceptable view today. And the reasoning would roughly be this. We must reach some understanding of ourselves, of the institutions of the country, of our thought, and so on and so on, or our ideals. Now these institutions and ideals are proved on inspection to be derivative from or modifications of older institutions, older ideals, and so on, so that the clarification of the present, the knowledge of ourselves as we could almost say, is not possible except in the form of historical reflection.

Now this conclusion, that history of political philosophy is necessary, is admitted also by the positivists. There are a few people (from time to time you hear a kind of Young Turks) who say there should be no history of political philosophy in political science departments, but that should be given in humanities courses. But this has remained quite ineffective up to the present day at least. So somehow, for reasons which are not always easy to fathom, it is admitted by the profession as a profession that the history of political philosophy is necessary.[7] And this is a very gratifying thing, because here we are on a ground which is common to all or almost all contemporary political scientists, and we must always be grateful if there is some common ground.

Now from this, what is universally granted, there follows a conclusion which is I think also universally granted in theory although not necessarily obeyed in practice, namely, that the history of political philosophy must be studied with the necessary care and assiduity. I mean, that is clear: if history of political philosophy [is to be studied], it must be done well; otherwise it is a disgraceful thing. So we must be happy about these two things [that are] commonly admitted, but we must however not conceal from ourselves a certain ambiguity. Those who are not convinced by the denial of the possibility of political philosophy by positivism or historicism will study the history of political philosophy in the expectation that political philosophy can be restored or recovered. They are open to the possibility of political philosophy, whereas the positivists and historicists are closed to it. In other words, this difference of motivation is very important and may also have practical consequences. But I put the emphasis now only on what is universally granted, or generally granted, and not on the differences.

Now I come[8] to the third point. Why a Platonic dialogue? If we must study the history of political philosophy, we must pay particular attention to its origins. For the origin is a time at which it was being established or about to be established. After it had become established or become a tradition, it is likely to have been taken for granted, whereas in

the moment of its origins it was not taken for granted. Its possibility or necessity still had to be established. Now where do we find that origin? According to the traditional view, the originator of political philosophy was Socrates. This is today not universally admitted, not at all. But let me only assert it here, that I think this old-fashioned traditional view is true—it only needs some footnotes, but the substance of the statement would not be affected. You all have heard that there were men who were so-called sophists prior to Socrates, and some people say they were political philosophers, and some other men—I cannot go into that now; it is not necessary. So Socrates is, at any rate, I think generally admitted to be a very important man as far as the origin of political philosophy is concerned.

Yet Socrates has one great defect, which is also universally known: he did not write books. And therefore, if we want to study the origins of political philosophy we have practically no choice but to study Plato. Naturally it is very important to study Aristotle, but there is an important difference between Plato and Aristotle in this respect: in Plato, we can observe the ascent from the prephilosophic or prescientific understanding of politics to political philosophy, whereas in Aristotle political philosophy is already constituted as a science, established as a science. You only have to compare the beginning of Aristotle's *Politics*—the first ten lines, let us say—with the first ten lines of Plato's *Republic* to see the difference. The *Politics*, we can say, is a treatise. The *Republic* and the other works of Plato are dialogues.

I must say something about this implication. What does this mean? When we read the *Politics* we hear Aristotle talking to us all the time unless he quotes someone. But even then, [in the] quotation[s, Aristotle is speaking, since Aristotle cites all the] quotation[s]. But when we read a Platonic dialogue, we hear only Plato's characters, never Plato himself, because even if a dialogue is merely told, narrated and not performed, Plato is never the narrator. Now this has some implications. So we are eager to know what Plato said, and we never hear him. But there is a simple answer: Plato has mouthpieces. For example, in the dialogue which we are going to discuss, the *Meno*, [Meno] is of course not a mouthpiece of Plato. I say "of course," and I should add a question mark: Why "of course"? But I won't go into that now. And Plato's mouthpiece is especially, of course, Socrates. But Socrates is not always the mouthpiece; in the *Laws*, Plato's *Laws*, his largest work,[9] the mouthpiece is the Athenian stranger, not Socrates. Why[10] does Plato have a variety of such mouthpieces? He doesn't tell us. Plato doesn't tell us anything. But if we do not know that, we do not know strictly speaking what it means to be a mouthpiece of Plato. But someone could say: Well, let us not be supercritical, hypercritical, or hyperexact; no one in his senses can deny that Socrates is mostly Plato's mouthpiece. That's quite true, but then there is a difficulty, because one of the chief characteristics of Socrates is that he was an ironical man, and then we are in a way back where we started. Plato speaks through the mouth of an ironical man, and that is almost the same as not to speak at all, because an ironical statement is surely a statement which you cannot take literally, and [which] you have to figure out for yourself.

I will add only a few points about this question which will be taken up later on at some greater length. There is one statement, not of Plato of course but of Socrates, in one

dialogue called the *Phaedrus*, dealing with writings. And what is said there amounts to this. Writings are essentially defective. Only oral communication can be adequate.[iv] And one reason why writings are essentially defective is that they say the same thing to all people. So while writings are essentially defective, yet Plato wrote[11]—he wrote books. We infer that these books are meant to be writings free from the essential defects of writings, i.e., they are meant to say different things to different people, to different kinds of people. They achieve this not accidentally, as every book does. You know, almost every book is read differently by different people, but they are so contrived as to say different things to different kinds of people. Now if this is a peculiarity of the Platonic dialogues, if they are written in a peculiar way, they also must be read in a peculiar way. How must we read them in order to arrive at that understanding which is meant for the best kind of readers? From Plato's point of view, it is absolutely essential that there must be a best kind and not *n* equally good kinds. That's out of the question. Otherwise there would not be ultimate unity, and that is incompatible with Plato's thought. Therefore, for Plato there must be one final, best understanding.

Now this question is also discussed in the same dialogue, *Phaedrus*, where Socrates is made to speak of logographic necessity, of the necessity governing the writing of speeches or, as we can say, the necessity governing the writing of good books. In such a book, everything is necessary: there is nothing ornamental or for relaxation, or for the mere whim; no chance event. If Socrates meets someone by chance coming out of a building, this is of course a chance event. But in the Platonic dialogue it is no longer a chance event: it is necessary. The *Euthyphro*, *On Piety*: Euthyphro is a kind of priest; Socrates meets him by chance. But in the dialogue, Socrates meeting Euthyphro is a necessity. So *the* dialogue on piety must be a dialogue with a priest. And the question arises then, which we cannot answer now: Why this particular priest? This would appear if we studied the dialogue.

So in other words, in every dialogue, however abstruse (some of them are), there is always a kind of what one may call framework. For example, in the *Republic*—you know the story: where they meet, with whom they meet, and at what time, et cetera. This framework is as important as the content, i.e.,[12] [as] the speeches which they exchange about a general subject like justice or piety. Let's take the example of the *Republic*. This is a conversation taking place in the Piraeus, the harbor of Athens, in the house of a man called Cephalus. And the conversation takes the place of a dinner and a show with these and these characters, especially two men called Glaucon and Adeimantus. Why did Plato choose this situation, with all its ingredients? Socrates speaks in the bulk of the *Republic* with a view to Glaucon and Adeimantus. There are some sections in which he speaks especially toward Glaucon, which we could call the Glaucon sections; and there are others in which he speaks especially to Adeimantus, which we could call the Adeimantus sections. Socrates adapts himself to the capacities and characters of his interlocutors. He does not say the same thing to everybody. And that is the secret of his irony: the adaptation to the view of the interlocutor. Therefore, if we want to understand a Platonic dialogue, we must translate the statements made toward this or that man, *ad hominem*; we

[iv] *Phaedrus* 274b6-277a5.

must translate these statements into absolute statements as Socrates or Plato would make them to himself in his reflections.

Let me give you one example, from the *Republic* again. The *Republic* contains a kind of psychology, a doctrine of the soul. And in this doctrine the distinction between spiritedness—such things like anger—and desire plays a very great role. And it is asserted that spiritedness is the ally of reason against desire. Desire must be restrained by the reason. But fortunately, reason is supported in this fight, in this restraint, by spiritedness, a nobler part of the soul than the merely desiring part. And it is asserted that spiritedness never conspires with desire against reason. Glaucon affirms this with an oath: "By Zeus!" Spiritedness never conspires with desire against reason.[v] Now you all know from your experience (one can be easily reminded of it) that this isn't true. And Glaucon's oath doesn't make it truer. If a child wants, desires a doll or candy, and the desired thing is taken away from the child,[13] the child may very well get angry, and the anger supports the desire. And this is true not only of children [laughter]; this is true also of grownups. And the severe philosophers would say when we grieve about the loss of someone dear to us, in a way we do the same thing in an adult manner what the child does regarding the plaything which is taken away from him. So we take this example: the fact that Glaucon says, "By Zeus" spiritedness never conspires with desire against reason. And Socrates does not contradict it; he even suggests it to him. This does not prove that this is Socrates's serious opinion. And this has very grave consequences, because if[14] spiritedness is not simply superior to desire, then the parallelism between the soul and the city, which is a main thought of the *Republic*, is not tenable. For in the case of the city it can easily be shown that the warrior class as described in the *Republic* is higher in rank than the merely acquisitive class. Higher demands are made of them: they are devoted to honor, whereas the others are devoted only to comfortable self-preservation and gain. Therefore, from the point of view of the city as Plato describes it, it is obvious that spiritedness, the characteristic of soldiers, is higher than desire. But if we do not look at the city, if we look at the individual soul, we do not see this superiority. The whole parallelism between the soul and the city proves not to be true. It would have to be restated very much in order to become true.

Now this much about the question why we study a Platonic dialogue and how we would have to study it in a very general way. Now I have to answer, or to try to answer the last introductory question: Why the *Meno*, of all dialogues? Now, why not the *Republic*, which recommends itself at once as *the* choice? Well, I have given more than one course, seminar or lecture course, on the *Republic*, and I have an intelligible and excusable desire to change because I also would like to learn a bit more. Or to state it differently, the *Republic* is not the only Platonic work devoted to political philosophy, so we have to look also at the others. The *Republic* confronts us with quite a few questions which are not dealt with in the *Republic*. To give only one example, one could not see from the *Republic* the crucial importance that Plato ascribes to what he calls *eros*. Also, connected with that, if one would like to know Plato's or Socrates's view of poetry, it is not sufficient to know the teaching of the *Republic* regarding poetry, especially in the tenth book where the poets are shown to be inferior regarding truth to every honest

[v] *Republic* 339d4-440b8.

craftsman—you know this statement which is quite shocking to modern sensitivities. So in order to find out a little bit more about Plato's view regarding *eros* and poetry, we would have to turn to Plato's *Symposium* or *Banquet*, which we did some time in the past.[vi] And from the *Banquet* we were led almost inevitably to the dialogue called *Gorgias*. The *Gorgias* is devoted to the subject of rhetoric, but the problem of rhetoric is from Plato's point of view very similar, to say the least, to that of poetry.

Now in the *Gorgias* we learned that rhetoric is a sham art subordinate to another sham art. That other sham art to which it is subordinate is called sophistry; and this induced us to study another Platonic dialogue, the *Protagoras*, which deals with sophists rather than sophistry. Now the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* have very much in common, and that means they have very striking—they contradict each other at crucial points. The central thesis of the *Gorgias* can be said to be that the good and the pleasant are radically different, not to say opposed. But the *Protagoras* culminates in a discussion which is based on the premise that the good is identical with the pleasant. So [15]which is true? In the *Protagoras*, more clearly at least than in the *Gorgias*, the question concerning virtue is raised. Virtue is said to be knowledge, but not teachable; and this is a great difficulty, because if it is knowledge, it should be teachable.

Now this brings it at once to the *Meno*, because that is precisely the subject of the *Meno* more clearly than of the *Gorgias*. Now, and the strange thing is that Meno, the hero of the *Meno*, is a pupil of Gorgias. We can say [that] in the *Meno* the difficulty set forth in the *Protagoras* is stated toward a pupil of Gorgias. Now Gorgias and Protagoras were celebrities of the first order, meaning there was something unsolid about them. They were in their way quite great men, but [there was] something—what we also mean in a way when we use the word celebrity—something unsolid, sensationalistic and so. And they were very different men—and I cannot now go into the question; it will become clear when we read the dialogue. Now let me conclude only that the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras*, the two dialogues we read, studied last, converge in a manner toward the *Meno*; and therefore we should take up the *Meno*.

Now the traditional subtitle of the *Meno* is: *or On Virtue*. No other dialogue has this subtitle, and virtue is obviously a very important subject, [one] crucial for political philosophy. The good society, the best regime according to Plato or Aristotle, is a society in which the best men rule. What does it mean? Best is the superlative of good. What does it mean to be a good man? What does goodness in this connection mean? What is virtue? And I trust that even the most progressive among you will not mind my using the word virtue, which is a very old-fashioned word and has fallen into evil days now. But if you want to you can also use the word excellence—excellence of the soul—excellence, which is less disliked. But I'm perfectly willing also to accept another word for that. We will see from the *Meno* itself what virtue meant in Plato, for Plato.

Now I must say, apart from the fact that the earlier courses which I have given on Plato make it very plausible that we should turn to the *Meno*, I don't know whether I would

[vi] Strauss taught a course on the *Symposium* at the University of Chicago in the autumn quarter of 1959.

have drawn this inference but for the fact that Jacob Klein's commentary on the *Meno*[vii] appeared about half a year ago or a year ago, and I think this truly induced me to devote this lecture course to the *Meno*. I must say a few words about the author, which is not merely gossip, as you will see very soon, but has very much to do with the substantive issues with which we are concerned. Klein's only other book—he is now a man of about 67—is not available in English; it was written in German: *Greek Logistics and the Genesis of Algebra*.[viii] The book is referred to more than once, and since I can read German I will give a report from time to time about important parts of that book. I do not know any study in the so-called history of ideas or history of science or whatever you call it which rivals this early book by Klein. To say this in advance, I do not believe that this present book is as good, although we can learn very much from it—more, I think, [than] from any other commentary.

Now in order to understand this virtue, this excellence of Klein, I must say a word about his background. In other words, I do not say the trivial thing—that he must be a man of great intelligence, otherwise he couldn't[16] [write such a book]—but the more specific: the way in which he handled, [in] which he used his intelligence. Now two names are somehow in the background of Klein's studies, and also of the *Meno*, although he never mentions these names for reasons of propriety in this book.[17] You see, may I say this. On the one hand, it is of course perfectly necessary to quote other people, and Klein is very, very generous in this respect, but there is also some other aspect of quoting, namely, in some cases it can approach the tasteless thing called name-dropping. And then one [does] better[18] not do it. Now the two names are those of Husserl and Heidegger, and I have to say a few words about it because it may remind some of you of some things of which you have heard before, and this will be helpful as a background for the course.

Now when Husserl appeared on the horizon, say, in Germany around 1900, the leading school was the so-called neo-Kantian school of Marburg, Marburg being a small university town. Now Husserl once stated in the simplest way what his intention was as follows: The school of Marburg, he said, begins with the roof, whereas one has to begin with the foundations. What he meant was this. The school of Marburg was above all concerned with the analysis of science, something which is today done in a very different way by logical positivism. The Marburg school does not start from the previous analysis of the world as perceived. This was a neo-Kantian school. Now if we look for one second back at Kant, from Kant's point of view the scientific understanding of the world, say, the Newtonian understanding, is simply the perfection of the ordinary, commonsense, prescientific understanding of the world, so that the analysis of science is identical in Kant with the analysis of common sense, science being only the more perfected form of it. But in the latter part of the nineteenth century it became more clear than it was before that science, i.e., modern science, is not simply the perfection of ordinary understanding but a transformation, a specific transformation of prescientific understanding. You will have heard of Eddington's example of the table as known to him from childhood, as

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[vii] Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's* Meno (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

[viii] *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

distinguished from the scientific table, the table as understood by the physicists.[ix] And for Eddington it is by no means certain that the scientific table is truer than the commonsense table. So Husserl was then concerned primarily with the world as perceived, as a matrix out of which the world as understood by science emerges. But one point of crucial importance was preserved in the transition from neo-Kantianism to Husserl: philosophic understanding of the world must be the understanding of how it constitutes itself, of how it builds itself up in and by the pure consciousness. I will not explain now what that is. It will become partly clear for everyone in a second.

Now then I have to turn to Heidegger. Heidegger's critique of Husserl can be stated in a very inadequate and very insufficient, but for our present purposes proper way as follows. The thing as sensibly perceived—say, the table—is not the primarily given thing. The thing as an object of sense perception is already the product of an abstraction. The primary thing is the thing in use, which as such is relative not only to our perception but above all to our needs, our concerns. The value predicates like useful, useless, beautiful, ugly, graceful, and so on belong as much to it as its size, its color and the like, which we ascribe to sense perception strictly speaking. The thing as the object of sense perception strictly understood is not the whole thing, but an abstraction. Correspondingly, the whole thing cannot be understood in the light of the pure consciousness but it must be understood in the light of the whole man, not merely the consciousness. The pure consciousness is, as Heidegger put it, "a fantastically idealized subject." And this is shown most simply by the fact that man's essential mortality is disregarded in the talk of pure consciousness. The pure consciousness is in one sense meant to be the human consciousness, and on the other hand, one of the most crucial characteristics of everything human, namely, man's mortality, is forgotten.

Now starting from the object of sense perception in contradistinction to the thing in its fullness is due to the understanding of man as above all a perceiving, contemplative being. Is this understanding sound? It surely is a heritage from the Greek philosophic tradition. According to the Greek view, being means being present, being available; and therefore being in the highest sense would be being always present, being sempiternal or eternal. Heidegger questions this view and therewith the whole tradition of philosophy. He was especially concerned with Aristotle much more than with Plato, and this is probably, if I may mention this in passing, connected with the fact that he is the first great German philosopher who is of Catholic origin. All the other great philosophers of Germany were Protestants. In order to uproot the tradition stemming from the Greeks, or rather to see with the greatest clarity the fundamental limitations of Greek and traditional thought, he studied Aristotle. And the implication of that study, and which gave it its peculiar importance, was that the questioning of the tradition required the questioning of the traditional understanding of the tradition, i.e., he could not simply accept what was found, not only in textbooks but even [in] the most solid studies, as an adequate

[ix] Arthur Eddington, Plumian Professor of Astronomy at Trinity College Cambridge, opened his Gifford Lectures on the nature of the physical world at the University of Edinburgh in 1927 with an example of two tables. The two tables represented two parallel words: one, the world of concrete, sensible reality; and the other, the world as described by physics.

interpretation. He had to go back to Aristotle himself and devote [himself to] a very unusual study of that.

I return now to Klein. Now Husserl and Heidegger were somehow his teachers. What is peculiar to him is this, that the fresh understanding of Aristotle which Heidegger had decisively prepared does not necessarily lead to the rejection of Aristotle's fundamental position; and from this point of view he has studied Aristotle and also Plato. This much about the background.

Now we will turn to that book, but before we do that I would like to know,[19] since I had to mention so many heterogeneous things, whether there is any point which you would like to bring up. Yes?

Student: I have one question on a seemingly fundamental issue that you raised, and that is the necessity of returning to the origins of political philosophy.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: I was wondering if you could elaborate on that. The thing that occurred to me was, if we accept the fact that man can view political problems and discuss political philosophy through common sense, that he is not simply bound by his time and his age, then why is it that we stress going back to a time in which there were no preconceptions, or there was no tradition?

LS: No tradition—there were of course preconceptions. Well, now. How do we proceed? I mean, give a simple example of such a reflection.

Same Student: . . .

LS: Give a simple example of a reflection, of a philosophical reflection of this nature—or do you mean a particular question, say, what should be done about Vietnam or so? This is not in itself—

Same Student: No, I was thinking of something[20] more fundamental. You know, if we take the issue of democracy, for example, and we want to discuss the nature of democracy, the virtues of democracy, why is it that we must return—

LS: Ya, well, let us take this example. I believe that one will understand democracy better if one understands the alternatives to democracy. In other words, someone was raised and brought up in a democracy: he knows absolutely nothing else and understands no alternative to that, [and hence] he understands the democracy less. He may be in a way a more reliable democrat; that's a ticklish question.[21] He cannot be said, however, to be a reflective fellow, you see? So now everyone knows that, and therefore everyone says we must have something like "isms" courses today, ya? But since fascism is now for the moment obsolete, [the alternative is] communism. All right. But the point is that there are certain things in common to communism and democracy, you know? After all, if you

read the *Communist Manifesto*, which is after all the founding statement, however difficult it may be to construct present-day communist policy from it, there you see a movement of the large majority on behalf of the large majority: democracy. Since they themselves call these other communist states people's democracies,[22] they are not simply the opposite of democracy. Therefore we cannot see [in communism] the true alternative to democracy. There[fore] we have to go back, as I explained briefly, to older views, to, say, simply aristocracy: Plato and Aristotle. That would be one way. But take something else: when reflections today which have a somewhat theoretical character cannot help knowing even of course today[23]—after all, we must have some notion of the whole dimension within which political things or actions occur. How would you call that? I mean, you can say the universe, and that is true but that is too general. Pardon?

Student: Would you say history?

LS: All right,[24] History. Permit me to suggest for a moment Society, Society with a capital "S." Ya? But when people speak about political things and Society as they always do, they still have in mind that there is a distinction somehow between Society and state. You surely have heard that. Therefore, if we want to have clarity, to be reflective, then we must go into this question: What is the relation between state and Society? And then we must raise the more elementary question: Is this distinction altogether necessary? And we are stimulated to raise these questions by observing that what Socrates and Plato and Aristotle are speaking about, what they call the *polis*, antedates as it were the distinction between state and Society. Do you see? Good. Now in other words, that historical studies are necessary if we want to understand ourselves, I think that is easy to show; it would also be easy for someone who, say, spoke of history.

Now this word history in the sense in which you used it would never have been used, say, two hundred years ago. People say that there is a philosophy of history in Plato or in Thucydides, or in the Old Testament, and so on. But[25] [it] is easy to show that this is simply not true, that[26] we project back our conceptions into these texts. And therefore we can never see what are the premises and implications of our fundamental concepts. Now[27] of course I have not sufficiently answered your question. I know this quite well, because the question is: Why should, say, Plato and Aristotle have here an advantage over all other thinkers? And I would give this answer. After Aristotle, and through Aristotle, a framework of concepts was established and was then inherited by later generations. This inheriting meant, of course, also modification. And those men who rebelled against Aristotle in the seventeenth century took over very much of Aristotle in the rebellion.[28] We never witness as it were later on the process of the original acquisition of the fundamental concepts by starting from prephilosophic thought. This is a unique advantage which this formative time—say, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—has. Next question, please. Yes?

Same Student: Could you clarify for me then the difference between saying that we are forced to view political philosophy through the concepts that have come down to us and the historicist position, which says that those values and those lines of argument which

are evolved in certain historical epochs are influenced, in fact determined, by the concepts that they have received.

LS: I do not know. I mean,[29] your question contains a number of questions. But I will limit myself only to one part which I think I clearly understood. This return to the origin, which I believe is necessary for the sake of clarity, does not by any means imply that we will say [that] what was taught at the beginning is the final thought. [LS taps on the table for emphasis] That may very well have to be modified, but the modifications will have to be done in full clarity, in full clarity so that the deviations, modifications—say, transmissions, what Husserl called the sedimentation—has to be counteracted by a process of conscious reflection. That is—yes?

Mr. Reinken: When you spoke of Heidegger, you seemed to say that Heidegger distinguished between an understanding by the pure consciousness which is determined by sensation, and that it is better to have an understanding which considers the understanding by man, who is finite and mortal. When you said this—

LS: But that is a very crude—all right. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: All right. But the question I want to ask is, did you drag in the thing in itself as a topic? Does that need to be gone into?

LS: No, I did not. No, I will have to speak of it later in the course, but this did not enter in at all. Because the thing in itself doesn't play any role in either Husserl or Heidegger. That is a Kantian—

Mr. Reinken: I am afraid I misheard you.

LS: Ya. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Can you tell me, or if you will later in the course, when you said that despite this different understanding of being Heidegger doesn't necessarily reject the very basis of Aristotle's—

LS: Ya. Well,[30] rejecting is a crude word which Heidegger would surely detest[31], but still, for very provisional purposes one can nevertheless use that. But he would simply say [that] the Aristotelian or generally the Greek understanding of being is too narrow. And he stated, to mention only one point, the Greek understanding of being means being available, being present or, to use a very common term now stemming from Aristotle, being actual, being real. These words are now used synonymously, although they have very different . . . Now the point which Heidegger made in his first and in a way greatest book[x] was: possibility is higher than actuality. Now this requires obviously a very different understanding of being, if possibility is to be higher than actuality. And this is connected with the fact that action, *praxis*, has always to do with things to be done, not with things available. Therefore one can also state what Heidegger means provisionally

[x] *Being and Time* (1927).

as follows: the traditional distinction between theory and *praxis*, which is canonic, surely since Aristotle and to some extent of course since Plato, is ultimately not tenable. The will, the decisions, the commitment is as important and ultimately more important for the truth than what is merely theoretically known. Well, you must have read this a million of times when you were in France.

Mr. Butterworth: The thing that bothers me is how this can be set forth, and yet you would say that one could take this position, re-read Aristotle, and not—

LS: Well, because there is a possibility that the Heideggerian position as developed by him is open to grave objections. In other words, the few words I said about him are of course in no way an adequate presentation of the whole issue. I only tried to show how, given this position, Heidegger came to pay an intense philosophic attention to Aristotle which is unrivalled in modern times. I mean, you had it of course in the Middle Ages, but there it was fundamentally on the basis of an agreement with Aristotle, apart from the things which were controversial between revelation and philosophy. But here [Heidegger came] from a point of view which[32] cannot [simply] be called Aristotelian.

Mr. Butterworth: Perhaps I misunderstood you, but I thought you tied in Klein to this.

LS: No, Klein learned[33] from Heidegger something of the true Aristotle compared with the Aristotle of the modern historiography. Now—Mr. Burnam.

Mr. Burnam: Yes. Did you mean to assert any other relationship between Klein and Husserl and Heidegger?

LS: No, that was sufficient. The reason why I do this is as follows: because as we will see very soon when we come into the commentary, this distinction between scientific understanding and commonsense understanding plays a very great role in Klein's interpretation of the *Meno*. He doesn't call it by these terms; he speaks of colloquial meanings and technical meanings of terms, but that is very close to what we mean today. And I hope we can reach a deeper understanding of this whole issue of common sense and science by studying this book.

Mr. Burnam: I just have one other question. Are you aware of English translations of Heidegger in which this particular issue is—

LS: Ya, but I have never looked at an English translation because I can read German. And what I have seen occasionally when someone came to me in Germany, I had great difficulty in understanding it, difficulties which were less when I looked at the German original. In other words, it would require almost a genius of [a] translator to translate him adequately. I do not know. I think the book which came out rather late, on Nietzsche—the first volume is, I believe, the book which is most helpful as an introduction into Heidegger's thought. But this is of course not accessible in English.[xi] The first volume

[xi] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vols. 1 and 2, trans. David Farrell Krell (NY: Harper One, 1991), and *Nietzsche*, vols. 3 and 4, trans. David Farrell Krell (NY: Harper One, 1991).

was six hundred fifty pages—so[34] if one doesn't read German, one depends on the translations or on, how should I say, on writings about [Heidegger]. I do not know much of this literature. I'm sorry, I can't help you there.

So it is of no use to begin now with the study of the *Meno*, and I wonder whether there is any further question. It would be[35] [a] wiser use of the five minutes which we still have than to begin what we would have to repeat next time.

Mr. Reinken: Would it be worthwhile to try to re-explain that business about Heidegger? This distinction—

LS: Now, I thought the thought in itself was simple. [Laughter] Well, let us start from the British empiricists.[xii] What do they start from, especially Hume, at the end? The simple sensations.[36] This is somehow the beginning of philosophy. In other words, not ontology, not metaphysics, or what have you, but the analysis of the human understanding: How do we arrive at concepts given the fact that the starting points are sensations, if not mere sense data? Now Kant's critique of Hume meant that it is impossible to understand knowledge in terms of sensualism or empiricism because the character which knowledge has of being necessary and universally valid cannot be understood as derivative from sense perception. What you sensually perceive never has in itself the character of being necessary and universally valid. And therefore Kant asserted [that] the ground of knowledge is above all human understanding, human reason, which can in no way be derived, deduced from sense perception; and for Kant this understanding of reason and the way in which it cooperates with the radically different sense perceptions, this was at the same time the analysis of science. Good.

Now in Husserl it had become doubtful whether the analysis of science can be identical with the analysis of our ordinary understanding of sensually perceived things. I reminded you of Eddington: the ordinary table, the table we know from our childhood in contradistinction to the scientific table. The scientific understanding is not simply the perfection of ordinary understanding but a modification of it; and therefore we must first have understanding of the prescientific understanding of the world, of the objects of perception—full objects of perception, not mere sense data like blue, green, hard, but table, tree, or whatever it may be. And this was the key point of Husserl, the starting point for him. Heidegger started, you can say, by being more radical in the same direction as Husserl had been, saying that it is not true that the object of sense perception, the object of what we see, hear and so on; our whole grasp, theoretical grasp of the thing is the fundamental thing. But the fundamental phenomenon, the full thing, the whole thing, is relative not to the mere sense perception plus reason, but to what we can loosely call the whole man: his concerns, his needs, his whole life. I deliberately avoided the term existence because this would only be a word in this connection without a longer discussion. Do you see this point? From the object of science, you go to the object of sense perception: you go to the full thing. For example, such a question—

[xii] John Locke, Bishop Berkeley, David Hume, for whom knowledge comes from sense perception only.

Mr. Reinken: I did not think you had said otherwise. I just wanted to be sure.

LS: Fine. Well, I think we'll—yes?

Student: Do you have any particular preference for the text of *Meno* we use?

LS: I think we usually use, how [is] it[37] called, the Loeb classics. Did I not state this for the bookstore?

Same Student: Yeah. But I was wondering if you had your own, would you care for us to get the Loeb classics?

LS: No, no, I mean one has to go back to the original anyway.

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[1] Deleted "that something worse comes"
[2] Moved "in our age." Deleted "Will you open the window, please? It is very hot here."
[3] Deleted "and."
[4] Deleted "to."
[5] Deleted "years ago…no, hundred-thirty...."
[6] Deleted "also"
[7] Deleted "So…."
[8] Deleted "now."
[9] Moved "for example,."
[10] Deleted "did Plato have…."
[11] Deleted "writings"
[12] Deleted "what…."
[13] Deleted "and."
[14] Deleted "desire…."
[15] Deleted "there is"
[16] Deleted "do that."
[17] Deleted "The first is Husserl."
[18] Moved "does."
[19] Deleted "whether there is any point—."
[20] Deleted "you know."
[21] Deleted "But…."
[22] Deleted "there is something—you know."
[23] Deleted "—that has become everyday talk—after all we must have some notion."
[24] Deleted "But I think…All right."
[25] Deleted "this is easily…."
[26] Deleted "we read…."
[27] Deleted "there is."
[28] Deleted "And this is…."
[29] Deleted "…there are…."
[30] Deleted "this is…."
[31] Deleted "I mean, whatever…."
[32] Deleted "is not." Moved "simply."
[33] Deleted "from Aristotle…I'm sorry,"
[34] Deleted "one depends."
[35] Deleted "more."
[36] Deleted "Yeah." Moved "the simple sensations." Deleted "And there, the question arises…So this is."
[37] Deleted "is."

Session 2: March 31, 1966

Leo Strauss: Well, I explained last time in a provisional manner, first, what political philosophy is; second, why political philosophy is in need of an introduction in our age; third, why this introduction is best given in the form of a study of a Platonic dialogue; and fourth, why I chose this time the *Meno*. Now today we shall turn to the *Meno*. I urge you to read the *Meno* cursorily at once, say, over the weekend so that I do not have too unfair [an] advantage over you. [Laughter] Now since we shall study the *Meno* together with Klein's commentary, we must first consider Klein's introduction to his commentary, and let us start with that. The first sentence runs as follows: "In the past, for long stretches of time, writing commentaries was a way of expounding the truth."[i] By this he seems to indicate that this is not a merely historical study trying to explain what Plato taught, but that in a way[1] the truth will be expounded here. Now the fact to which he refers is of course well known. A theologian writing a commentary on the Bible means to expound the truth, and [to] Platonists of old, up to the closing of the Academy in 529, writing a commentary on a Platonic dialogue meant to expound the truth. And that is even true of the commentaries written on Aristotle throughout the Middle Ages; at least the largest part of these commentaries was meant to expound the truth presented by the master of those who know. So[2] Klein goes on as follows: "It still may be that." In other words, even today that is possible. But this is already a difficulty. And now read the sequel of this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> But how about commentaries on Platonic dialogues? Must they not be based on a variety of preconceptions and predecisions, on a vast area of questionable assumptions and anticipations, perhaps more so than any other venture of our understanding? And is not therefore such an undertaking almost self-defeating?[ii]

LS: Now we leave it at this. Now why should the difficulty be particularly great in the case of Platonic dialogues? Is a commentary, say, on Aristotle, or on Descartes, or whever it may [be]—on Hobbes—not also based on a variety of preconceptions and predecisions? This is hard to understand. Why are[3] commentaries on Platonic dialogues meant to convey the truth more questionable? Klein makes it only clear later what he means by that. What he has in mind are questions like these: Do works like the *Meno* claim to teach the truth at all? Do they not merely raise questions? And second, are they not rather works of art than treatises? And does art have anything to do with truth? And if it does, what is its relation to the truth, to that truth with which philosophy is concerned? Now in the next paragraph, Klein[4] becomes somewhat more intelligible. "First there is the conviction."

Mr. Reinken:

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[i] Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's* Meno (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3. (First published by The University of North Carolina Press, 1965.) Hereafter cited as "Klein."
[ii] Klein, 3.

> that a Platonic dialogue is not a book claiming to speak for itself. This conviction was, and still is, shared by many. Inferring from a remark in Aristotle's *Poetics* that a "Socratic" dialogue is akin to a mime, and nourished by information deriving mainly from Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus, historians and commentators have tried to see Platonic dialogues as dramas, philosophical mimes, philosophical comedies and tragedies, or at least to establish what their relation to mime, comedy, and tragedy is. One and a half centuries ago Schleiermacher set the tone.[iii]

LS: Yes. Now Schleiermacher is, one can say, the founder of modern Protestant theology, and he is the translator of Plato into German and a famous Platonic scholar. Now the Platonic dialogues are dramas. Why does a drama not claim to speak for itself, as is here asserted? Well, I suppose what he means is this. In a drama, the author himself never speaks; Plato never speaks in his dialogues. And this leads to great difficulties,[5] to which I alluded last time. If you say Plato has mouthpieces, but the chief mouthpiece is Socrates, famous for his irony and so on—I do not have to go into that. Klein's point, which he makes in the sequel, is this: the Platonic dialogues are dramas. But the dramatic character of the Platonic dialogues, of which very many people talk, is not taken seriously enough. Now what does this mean? Page 5, third paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> We shall consider, by way of example, views expressed in Rene Schaerer's[iv] book, where the main problem is precisely to find the right approach to an understanding of Platonic dialogues. "Whatever the point of view from which one considers the Dialogues, they are ironical," writes Schaerer,[v] and there can hardly be any disagreement about that. For, to begin with, irony seems indeed the prevailing mode in which the Socrates of the dialogues speaks and acts. It is pertinent to quote J.A.K. Thomson[vi] on this subject. With a view not only to Thrasymachus' utterances in the *Republic* Thomson says: "When his contemporaries called Socrates ironical they did not mean to be complimentary."[vii] "The old Irony of the tragic or comic reversal of fortune they perfectly appreciated. But this new kind, which had the trick of making you uncomfortable if you took it as a joke and of getting laughed at if you took it seriously? People did not like it, did not know what to make of it. But they were quite sure it was Irony. They called it so and it is because they so called it that Irony has its modern meaning."[viii]

[iii] Klein, 3.
[iv] Klein gives this and the following references: R. Schaerer, "La question platonicienne, Étude sur les rapports de la pensée et de l'expression dans les Dialogues," Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel, T.X, 1938, esp 157ff., 174, 190. 207. 218-34.
[v] Op. cit, 233: Quel que soit l'angle sous lequel on les considère, les *Dialogues* sont ironiques.
[vi] J.A.K. Thomson, *Irony: A Historical Introduction* (1926), esp. 169.
[vii] Op. cit., 168
[viii] Klein, 5.

LS: Yes, now let us stop here for a moment. It is generally admitted the Platonic dialogues are dramas, and it is generally admitted that this means the same as that they are ironical—generally, not universally. And from this we can in a way start. Socrates was described as ironic by his contemporaries, as we see from the Platonic dialogues themselves. And according to Thomson, whom Klein quotes, this was based on the fact that the Athenians were familiar with irony from the tragic or comic ironies in tragic or comic [dramas].[6] Now there is one point which we should explain. The term tragic or comic irony, or especially tragic irony, is as far as I know a discovery of the late seventeenth century. There is nothing of tragic or comic irony in classical antiquity. We have to consider [this] in order not to misunderstand the irony completely; we have to start from its primary meaning. Now the primary meaning is indeed very far from flattering. It means dissimulation, dissembling. But it is however not entirely ignoble because it means above all to dissemble one's superiority, to make oneself smaller, less important, less excellent than one is. And understood in this sense it may even be not only a graceful vice, but even an aspect of virtue. When Aristotle speaks of the magnanimous man in his *Ethics*, he says [that] he is ironical toward the many, i.e., he dissembles his worth to the many. He is humane; he doesn't wish to hurt feelings.

Now what has this to do with the famous Socratic irony? If it is true that the greatest excellence comprising all other excellences is wisdom, then Socratic irony would consist in Socrates's dissembling his wisdom. And this could take various forms. For example, when he is asked something, he says, "I do not know." Or accepting opinions which are generally accepted, or rather generally accepted and which he regards as wholly inadequate,[7] identif[ying] himself with them provisionally.[8] There would be various forms in which this could be done. Now the irony of Socrates's irony consists in the fact that while he is pretending to be ignorant,[9] he is not only pretending to be ignorant but in a sense [is] ignorant—not in the crude way in which it appears [at] first, but in a more subtle way he is ignorant. Let us leave it at this remark for the time being. Now let us continue where we left off. "This meaning—"

Mr. Reinken:

> implies in any event that for a statement or a behavior to *be* ironical there must be *someone* capable of *understanding* that it is ironical. It is true, a self-possessed person may derive, all by himself, some satisfaction from speaking "ironically" to someone else who does not see through the irony at all. In this case, the speaker himself is the lonely observer of the situation. But this much can be safely said of Socrates as he appears in the Platonic dialogues: he is not ironical to satisfy himself. Everything about Socrates' irony depends on the presence of other people who are capable of catching the irony, of hearing what is not said. A dialogue, then, presupposes people listening to the conversation not as casual and indifferent spectators but as silent participants.[ix]

LS: And now the end of this paragraph, "a (Platonic) dialogue has not taken place."

Mr. Reinken:[10]

[ix] Klein, 5-6.

> a (Platonic) dialogue has not taken place if we, the listeners or readers, did not actively participate in it; lacking such a participation, all that is before us is indeed nothing but a book.[x]

LS: So irony requires that there are people present to catch the irony, who understand what is not said—you know, irony being dissimulation, of course something is not said. There must be readers who silently participate in the dialogue; without such participation, the dialogue is not understood. In other words, you cannot look at it as at a film and be excited and amused, amazed, or whatever by it: you have to *participate* in it. This is the first key point which Klein makes. Now he states then in the sequel that according to the common view, with which he takes issue, the reader is a mere spectator and not a participant, and he rejects this. Now[11] let us read on page 7, the second paragraph and the note from Schleiermacher.

Mr. Reinken:

> It seems that it is not enough to talk about the dramatic character of Platonic dialogues "from the outside."

LS: In other words, as if it were a drama going on on the stage and is in no way your business; you get some kicks out of it and that's all. Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> We have to play our role in them, too. We have to be serious about the contention that a Platonic dialogue, being indeed an "imitation of Socrates" actually continues Socrates' work. This again is by no means a novel view.[xi]

LS: Now let us read this quotation from Schleiermacher in note 23, which is indeed I think the finest statement on the Platonic dialogues made in modern times.

Mr. Reinken:

> Plato's main point must have been "to guide each investigation and to design it, from the very beginning, in such a way as to compel the reader either to produce inwardly, on his own, the intended thought or to yield, in a most definite manner, to the feeling of having found nothing and understood nothing. For this purpose it is required that the result of the investigation be not simply stated and put down in so many words . . . but that the reader's soul is constrained to search for the result and be set on the way on which it can find what it seeks. The first is done by awakening in the soul of the reader the awareness of its own state of ignorance, an awareness so clear that the soul cannot possibly wish to remain in that state. The second is done either by weaving a riddle out of contradictions, a riddle the only possible solution of which lies in the intended thought, and by often injecting, in a seemingly most strange and casual manner, one hint or another, which only he who is really and spontaneously engaged in searching notices and understands; or by covering the primary investigation with another one, but not as if the other one

[x] Klein, 6.
[xi] Klein, 7.

> were a veil, but as if it were naturally grown skin: this other investigation hides from the inattentive reader, and only from him, the very thing which is meant to observed or to be found, while the attentive reader's ability to perceive the intrinsic connection between the two investigations is sharpened and enhanced."[xii]

LS: So Plato, in other words, does not present the truth but he enables the attentive reader, and only him, to find it. Now this leads to a certain difficulty. If Plato does not present the truth ever, if this is understood rigorously and rigidly, then there is no Platonic *teaching* ever stated in any Platonic dialogue. And this seems to go too far. For example, do we not find in the *Republic* a teaching regarding the best polity—you know, communism and rule of the philosophers, and so on and so on? Let us see on page 9, the second paragraph beginning—

Mr. Reinken:

> This is not to say that the dialogues are void of all "doctrinal" assertions. On the contrary, this further consideration ought to guide our understanding of the dialogues: they contain a Platonic "doctrine"—by which is not meant what has come to be called a "philosophical system." The dialogues not only embody the famous "oracular" and "paradoxical" statements emanating from Socrates ("virtue is knowledge," "nobody does does evil knowingly," "it is better to suffer than to commit injustice") and are, to a large extent protreptic plays based on these, but they also discuss and state, more or less explicitly, the ultimate foundations on which those statements rest and the far-reaching consequences which flow from them. But never is this done with "complete clarity." It is still up to us to try to clarify those foundations and consequences, using, if necessary, "another, longer and more involved road,"[xiii] and then to accept, correct, or reject them—it is up to us, in other words, to engage in "philosophy."[xiv]

LS: The word "protreptic plays" which Klein uses here—*protrepein* means driving forward, driving forward in moving men forward toward something, say, to virtue. So there is a doctrinal element in the Platonic dialogues, but this is not presented with sufficient clarity and [is] deliberately presented with insufficient clarity. If we may take an example from the *Republic*, we are confronted here with a statement about the best political order, this famous order, and it is our business to examine whether it is truly desirable and truly possible. It is said to be desirable and said to be possible, but this one can say is a teaching of Socrates in the *Republic*[12] but the fact that he asserts it does not yet mean that he means it in the way in which it sounds at first glance.

Now let us turn now to the next paragraph in which Klein explains what he meant by the very cryptical statement at the beginning of the introduction.

Mr. Reinken:

[xii] Klein, n. 23, 7-8. Ellipsis in original.
[xiii] Republic 435d3.
[xiv] Klein, 9.

> That is why that layer of preconceptions and predecisions, mentioned in the beginning, must, of necessity, weigh so heavily on us. Our role as participants in the dialogue is fundamentally not different from that of Plato's own contemporaries who may have listened to[13] somebody reading them aloud. There is no question that we share with them views commonly held by many people at all times. But there is this difference: between them and us there is the immense philosophical—and philological—tradition of the ages which stems, for the most part, from Socrates' and Plato's teaching. It is not in our power to remain untouched by it. And as much as this tradition may help our understanding, it may also obstruct and distort it. We can try to avoid at least two pitfalls: (*a*) to become obsessed by the view that the chronology of the Platonic dialogues implies a "development" in Plato's own thinking and that an insight into this development contributes in a significant way to the understanding of the dialogues themselves; (*b*) to attempt to render what is said and shown in the dialogues in petrified terms derived—after centuries of use and abuse—from Aristotle's technical vocabulary.[xv]

LS: Ya, we can leave it at this point. So what is then this peculiar difficulty which we have to overcome if we try to understand [a] Platonic dialogue, i.e., to engage in philosophizing with the guidance, with the help of Plato or Socrates? Now one point which Klein does not discuss here and which we cannot help mentioning is this: there is another obstacle, a more obvious obstacle. We assume that we know quite a few things, things of importance which Plato did not know[14]: everything which has come to light in modern times by modern philosophy or science and modern historical research and the enormous expansion of the historical horizon in modern times. This seems to[15] create a difficulty in itself. In other words, the question [is]: Does Plato teach the truth?[16] Is he not under the spell of certain Greek prejudices which make questionable, more or less, what he teaches? Klein is concerned only with two points here, and the first is that since the nineteenth century a historical approach to Plato has emerged, and a very important part of this historical approach is to[17] believe that the understanding of Plato's thought is the understanding of the genesis of that thought. And this is connected with the belief that we know the sequence in which Plato has written the dialogues. There is an enormous literature on this subject. But let us assume that we know with reasonable certainty, say, that the *Apology* and *Crito* were written prior to the *Meno*, and the *Meno* prior to the *Republic*, and the *Republic* prior to the *Laws*; this does not mean by itself that Plato did not *know* [at the time of his earlier writings] what he is seen [explicitly] to know, say, in his latest writings. The sequence in which a man writes his books does not necessarily correspond to the sequence in which he thinks these thoughts. He may have written deliberately from the very beginning with these later things in mind dialogues which deal more with the lower range of the problem . . . we cannot know that. Paul Shorey, who translated the *Republic* in the Loeb classics, who was a professor of classical philology here in Chicago, had the great merit, around the year 1900, to protest against this very powerful prejudice of the nineteenth century.[xvi] And today I believe there are some more

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[xv] Klein, 9.

[xvi] Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (1903).

people who are willing to grant this, that the question of when Plato wrote a dialogue is very irrelevant for the understanding of that dialogue.

One could add another point connected with that, that according to present nineteenth- and twentieth-century Platonic scholarship it is taken for granted that certain dialogues which have come down to us as Platonic are not genuine. These are not the most famous dialogues, that is quite true; but still, this is also an assertion or an alleged finding which is in need of revision. The second point [made by Klein] is easy to understand, although very difficult to put into practice. [It is very hard not] to understand the dialogues in petrified terms derived from Aristotle's technical vocabulary,[18] and from these long traditions. But more obviously, it is not only Aristotle's technical vocabulary, it is also the vocabulary of our own time. It is very hard for present-day people to speak about Plato without using the term "values," for example, because everyone since the late nineteenth century speaks of values. But there is no equivalent to that in Plato, and we ourselves do not know without some reflection, some study, what induced men to introduce this term "values" in the nineteenth century, because these reasonings, these implicit reasonings give meaning to that term "values" whether one knows these implicit reasonings or not.

Good. Now up to this point Klein's exposition of the problem of the Platonic dialogue is not based on utterances of Plato himself, but on Aristotle, Schleiermacher, and so on. In the sequel, he turns to the Platonic statement on writings which we find in the *Phaedrus*, of which I spoke last time. Writings are as such defective; therefore Socrates did not write books. But Plato did write books, and the Platonic books must be presumed to be free from the defects of writings. We do not have to read that. Now let us turn to page 17.

Mr. Reinken:

> A properly written text will tend to transform the unavoidable deficiency of writing into a lever of learning and understanding. By imitating a discussion the character of incompleteness can be accentuated: as we all know, the movement inherent in any discussion, if it does not reach and end in complete agreement or complete clarification (which may happen but rarely happens), is the best inducement for its continuation. A properly written text will have, therefore, to initiate this movement and keep it alive by stringing it along decisive questions and partial or ambiguous answers. This, in itself, is nothing but an outgrowth of Socrates' veiled way of speaking. But beyond that, answers can be given in a written text by the very action it presents. That is what usually happens in Platonic dialogues and what constitutes their dramatic or mimetic quality. This also confers on the dialogues the quality of completeness as against their unfinished (aporetic) character in terms of the verbal argument. The dramatic answers may not refer directly to the questions asked but may refer to those implied in, or intimately connected with, them. Furthermore, these answers may or may not be perceived, depending on the intensity of our attention and participation. More often than not the dramatic answer anticipates the corresponding verbal argument; sometimes the dramatic answer accompanies the argument; sometimes the argument is underscored and put in relief, as it were, by

> what happens in the dialogue after the argument has been completed. All this reflects the character of Socrates himself, whose life and death speak still louder than his words. The power of words, however great, is limited. Words can be repeated or imitated; the thoughts conveyed by words cannot; an "imitated" thought is not a *thought*. But only actions of men, irrevocable as they are, lend themselves to genuine "imitation," in life, on the stage—or in words.[xvii]

LS: Now what Klein here suggests is this: In the first place, the dialogue is in many cases, as in the *Meno* but not in the *Republic*, externally incomplete. The question raised is not answered. But a work of art—to use a present-day expression wholly alien to Plato—a work of art must be completed,[19] and even if it is unfinished, deliberately unfinished, then of course its unfinishedness is a form of being finished. There are such works which have deliberately not been completed. However this may be, although the question is not answered,[20] the discussion ends in despair, so to speak. Klein asserts [that] the action of the dialogue, the silent action of the dialogue gives us the answer, and we must try to understand that. The questions are answered fully and unambiguously only by the deeds, as this is called by Plato. Why not by speeches? The speeches permit of parrot-like repetition; they can be imitated. Thoughts as thoughts cannot be imitated. You can only imitate the words which someone says, but if you repeat[21] [them] silently, as it were, you don't think it truly. But thoughts become accessible to others only through speeches. That is not true; they become accessible to others also by deeds. But to be seen in the deeds or action requires a greater effort than just listening to the speech. Only deeds, he says, can be imitated strictly speaking, since they are irrevocable.[22] If you imitate a deed of yourself or someone else, this new deed, this imitated deed is not the same deed. It cannot be. The words can be the same in this sense: the words can be imitated. At any rate, each dialogue contains an argumentative and a discursive ingredient. And now what is the relation between these two? Let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The dramatic and mimetic modes vary from dialogue to dialogue. But one can discern at least three different mimetic devices in them. One is that of ethological mimes, that is, of imitations of actions in which the speakers reveal themselves both in character and in thought, *kata te to ethos kai ten dianoian*, to use Aristotle's phrase, in which they show their souls "naked," to quote Plato himself. Another is that of doxological mimes, in which the falsity or rightness of an opinion is not only argued in words but also manifested by the character, the behavior, and the actions of the speakers themselves. The third one is that of mythological mimes, inasmuch as the drama of the dialogue presents, interprets, or replaces a myth (quite apart from myths told by Socrates and others in the course of a conversation). But in each case the medium, the vehicle, the spur of the action is uniquely the spoken word, the *logos*, by which Socrates lived and still lives. All depends not only on what, but on how, under what circumstances, where, and in what context something is being said. Within the dialogue, the *logos* thus has *two* functions. One is mimetic, the other argumentative. Their

[xvii] Klein, 17.

> interplay provides the texture into which we, the listeners or readers, have to weave our thread. That is how the drama itself, the deed, the "work," the *ergon* of any of the dialogues, which is in words[xviii] only, can encompass both, the dialogue's mimetic playfulness and its argumentative seriousness.[xix]

LS: Ya, let us stop here. And this is the only part of the introduction which we will read, up to this point. Now, to illustrate what Klein means by a single example, [let us consider] the deed, the action, in the *Republic* on the crudest level. They were supposed to get a dinner and to see a show, and this dinner and the show never take place. The action consists, we can say, in fasting and the deprivation of a show. The eating and the show are replaced by a discussion on justice.

Now let us turn to Klein's more precise formulation. When he distinguishes between the speech and the deed, it must be understood that the deed itself is of course accessible to us only by speech. The funny thing [is that what] we call [or] speak of [as] "drama" means perhaps something like action (the word "drama"); but surely there is no action. You see only speeches. Surely when you read it, you read only speeches; there is no action strictly speaking taking place.

Now the first point which he makes is this. Speech differs from deed in the sense that speech differs from *mimēsis*, imitation. The deed is an imitated deed but the vehicle of the deed is a speech, and therefore the speech, *logos*, has two functions: the mimetic one and the argumentative one. And Klein provisionally identifies the mimetic with the playful and the argumentative with the serious. Well, it's clear, when you approach such a dialogue and read it, you become[23] serious—reading the *Republic*, for example, when the question of justice comes up. I mean, the arguments are produced on both sides.[24] But [as for the playful, think of] the description of the situation in which this takes place—when we become aware of the fact, for example, that Glaucon is hungry and therefore makes a certain move without this being said, then we smile about this. The action is in a way the playful thing. But of course, given the ironical character of the argument, we can say with at least equal right that the argumentative is playful and the mimetic is serious. That is implied in what Klein said before.

There is an excess of the deed beyond the speech also in another respect. The speech is a speech about things, say, about justice. Therefore we have to look not only at the characters in the play and the circumstances of the characters, we also have to look at the things spoken about, the things discussed, and see whether the speech is adequate to them. I gave last time the example of the discussion of spiritedness in the *Republic*. Certain assertions are made and which we have to see: although Socrates and Glaucon agree and Glaucon even adds an oath to make sure of the truth, we cannot accept that; we have to look at the phenomenon Socrates has in mind. So in a Platonic dialogue Socrates attempts to guide people towards the good life, toward what is good for them, by speeches adapted to them, in different speeches adapted to different kinds of people. These speeches are not the true speech but they point to it. One can discover the true

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[xviii] Klein's gives the Greek (*logoi*).
[xix] Klein, 18.

speech only by seeing how Socrates adapts his speeches to the characters and circumstances of the interlocutors and by looking at the thing spoken about. Both things—both the characters and circumstances of the actors and the thing spoken about, they can all be described as deeds, *erga*, acts, in contradistinction to speeches.

Now in the sequel Klein discusses the cooperation of deed and speech in two Platonic dialogues, the *Charmides* and the *Theaetetus*. What he says about the *Charmides* may be stated as follows: We cannot understand a Platonic dialogue except by participating in it and[25] not remaining mere spectators. Now participating in a dialogue means participating in its argumentative and in its mimetic function. Participating in the argumentative function[26] consists of course in examining the argument, trying to know the truth, say, about justice. The participation in the mimetic function means according to Klein examining oneself, trying to reach self-knowledge. Now what has self-knowledge to do with imitation, with *mimēsis*? *Mimēsis* means imagemaking. There are natural images, for example, one's reflection in water. Water can be said to be a natural mirror. Imagemaking means, then, to hold a mirror to a man, and that means helping him toward self-knowledge. That is the simple connection between *mimēsis* and imagemaking. I give you an example very far away from Plato, [from the] second book of Samuel, chapter 12.

> And the Lord sent Nathan into David. And he came into him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler into the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

Here is a story, and the meaning of the story is that it be applied. And here is a particularly simple case; it is made in in order to be applied because it is meant to fit this particular case of David's injustice. Speaking of somebody else whom the addressee does not know—the name is not mentioned, a poor man—the addressee can be impartial, ya? David can say: An impossible action. If he had repeated the action in the terms in which David had done it, he would never have granted it[s injustice]. He would have found excuses. And secondly, the simplification, bringing out the core of the matter, the addressee cannot talk himself out of applying the lesson to himself. This is a simple example of why *mimēsis* is best for bringing about self-knowledge.

Now this much about Klein's introduction; and now let us turn to the commentary itself on page 35. Let us read the first two paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken:

> The title of the dialogue, "Meno," is well authenticated by Aristotle's unmistakable references to it.
>
> Why is this title chosen? Obviously, an answer, if there is any, cannot be given now. It might gradually emerge as the dialogue, and with it the commentary, proceeds.[xx]

LS: Now let us stop here. Klein doesn't say why he selected the *Meno* from all the Platonic dialogues, but the reason is the same as the one given here for another case. The reason cannot be [seen now, but it] will become clear from the commentary as it emerges. There is something in note 2 which is of some interest.

Mr. Reinken:

> This general remark seems necessary: we have to ask, in every case, what significance the title of a Platonic dialogue might have, for it does not appear to be chosen haphazardly. The title seems sometimes to state plainly, sometimes merely to hint at, and sometimes even to conceal altogether, the main theme of the dialogue or one of its important aspects. The claim, often usually made—

LS: Casually made.

Mr. Reinken:

> often casually made notably with regard to the *Phaedo*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Parmenides*, that Plato wished to set a "monument" to somebody he highly respected or to show his particular "affection" for a particular person, is not sufficiently founded and somewhat naïve. It is not applicable, in any case, to most of the dialogues.[xxi]

LS: Well, why is it somewhat naive? It would be simpler to say that Plato wished to set a monument to Socrates by the dialogues as a whole. But does Socrates ever occur in a Platonic book title? Oh yes. You are misled by the fact, because almost everyone misquotes the title, mis-cites the title: *Apology of Socrates*. That's the only case in which Socrates is mentioned. And we have a parallel in Xenophon who wrote four Socratic writings and the main book devoted to Socrates is called *Recollections*, *Apomnemoneumata*, and not, as it is sometimes said, *Recollections of Socrates*. Xenophon too uses the name of Socrates only in the title *Apology of Socrates*. So in other words, what Klein means is that Plato's reasons cannot be traced in this simplistic way to nice feelings.[27] Broader considerations are in order. So we'll leave this open, why it is called *Meno*. He is obviously the most important interlocutor of Socrates in this work. This we can safely say.

[xx] Klein, 35.
[xxi] Klein, 35, n. 2.

Now here comes a point which we have to consider for a moment. Who is Meno? Who is Meno? After all, if we can know something about[28] [him], this may throw some light on the dialogue. And this is a fairly long statement but we have to read it.

Mr. Reinken:

> Who is Meno? A preliminary answer to this question is that the answer can only be found in the dialogue itself, since Meno is one of the personages who speaks and acts in it, and it is *this* personage we are interested in. The dialogue is hardly written to satisfy our—otherwise legitimate—historical curiosity. The usual confusion, however, between Meno in the dialogue and the "historical" Meno—

LS: Meaning the Meno who truly lived and died. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> is not simply due to bad scholarly habits or thoughtlessness. The name "Meno"—as most names in Platonic dialogues—conveys a more or less vivid image to the mind of the listener or reader *before* the dialogue begins. Plato's contemporaries, at least those who might have been interested in the Dialogues, knew through gossip, slander, candid reports, reliable information, or even direct contact "about" most of the dialogues' personages. We, on our part, can reconstruct the images of those personages to some extent from whatever sources are available to us, and it is fair to assume that there is some correlation between the explicitness of the written sources and the vividness of the connotations that certain names had in their own time. This, and nothing else, justifies recourse to the "historical" accounts given of those personages.[xxii]

LS: So what he means, then, [is that] what "everyone" ("everyone" in quotations) knew, say, of Meno in Plato's time we also should know. There is nothing indefensible in this kind of reliance on information extraneous to the dialogue. Now we know of Meno especially through the work of a contemporary of Plato, Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Meno was one of the Greek commanders in the army which was engaged by the younger Cyrus, brother of the Persian king, against the Persian king at the time. And this ended in a disaster—the Battle of Cunaxa, 401,[29] [in which] Xenophon was also a commander, and he saved the Greek army and led it back to Greece. Xenophon has given us a report about Meno in the end of the second book of the *Anabasis*. Now the key point which Klein makes here is this. From Xenophon's report, Meno appears to be the arch-villain, an unusually vicious man. Not only was he unjust and faithless in every respect, but he was even proud of it, he boasted of it, and he had only contempt for people who were honest. One can say he was even diabolical, not only evil.

But of course, when you read Plato's *Meno* you find no trace of these villainous characteristics, and therefore people came to say: Well, this was Xenophon's view and that was Plato's view. You know? Now this difficulty is briefly touched upon by Klein on page 37. There is a kind of gossip of antiquity, perhaps going back to Plato's own time, according to which there was a kind of jealousy between Plato and Xenophon. And these

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[xxii] Klein, 35-36.

men, ordinarily professors at small German universities, conceived of the relation of Plato and Xenophon as of the relations which they had to a colleague teaching at another small university. [Laughter] Here he digs at that. And for example, Xenophon wrote a book called *Education of Cyrus*; and in the third book, I believe, of the *Laws*, Plato says something very negative about the *Education of Cyrus*.[xxiii] [Laughter] This is simply preposterous. But of course, one point we have to take very seriously. So he was the arch-villain as Xenophon knew him in Asia Minor, but this dialogue is obviously earlier than that. Now perhaps the Meno to whom Socrates talked was not yet the arch-villain. We do not know; I mean, we must be open to this possibility. If he should prove to be exactly the same as the one described by Xenophon then Socrates has seen through him owing to his marvelous power of divination. This could be. You know, sometimes he sees through a very young boy like Charmides, that he will become a very nasty tyrant when grown up. That can happen. But we must not assume that[30] [Meno] was an arch-villain, an actual arch-villain, a full-grown arch-villain at the time that the conversation takes place.

Now Xenophon is silent on the relation between Meno and Gorgias—Gorgias, the famous teacher of rhetoric with which he is linked up as we see right from the beginning of the dialogue. Instead Xenophon speaks of the relation between another Greek commander, Proxenus, and Gorgias. Now Proxenus, the pupil of Gorgias, is not villainous at all but only inefficient. He is a nice man, and he thinks in a way that all men are nice men. He can only command by persuasion and not by punishment,[31] and therefore, since the majority of the soldiers were not exactly gentlemen, he was a failure. In other words, Proxenus had the amiable vice, or the intellectual vice of believing in the omnipotence of speech in contradistinction to compulsion or coercion. Now this, by the way, is in agreement with what Aristotle suggests toward the end of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he speaks of the political science of the sophists. He suggests this much: that they believed in the omnipotence of speech and in other words have no sufficient understanding for the toughness of political life. This only in passing, because the very popular view that the sophists are without further ado to be identified with Machiavelli is in need of some rethinking.

But let us nevertheless keep this one thing in mind: what we know especially from Xenophon about Meno. And this is something quite amazing. The *Meno* is *the* Platonic dialogue devoted to virtue. No other Platonic dialogue has this as its traditional subtitle; the subtitles are probably not from Plato himself. Only the *Meno* has the subtitle *On Virtue*. So *the* dialogue on virtue takes place, is a conversation with a particularly vicious man—one can say with the most vicious man who appears in the Platonic dialogues. That shows Plato's irony. I give you some examples. In the *Laches*, another dialogue devoted to bravery, Socrates converses with generals. That is all right, but they are generals about to be defeated [laughter], and hence they are not the best kind of generals. The *Charmides* deals with moderation or self-control, but the interlocutors are future tyrants. There is also something funny about that. The *Republic* deals with justice and some of the characters, not all, are future victims of tyranny, i.e., of extreme injustice. But here, the case of the *Meno* surpasses all others because here is a man, a singularly vicious man, the

[xxiii] *Laws* 694c1-695b8.

interlocutor in the dialogue on virtue. But as I said before, we must keep in mind the possibility that at the time of the dialogue Meno was not yet an arch-villain. One thing is clear. There is another character of the dialogue, and that is Anytus, the accuser of Socrates (the chief accuser according to some reports) [32]and a politician. And Meno is surely closer to Socrates than Anytus, and so however villainous Meno was, there is something like a redeeming feature. We must see that.

We can take it for granted that Plato knew Meno, [and] that Meno had become this arch-villain[33] [as] he is presented by Xenophon, just as he knew that Laches would be defeated,[34] [since Laches had already been] defeated when[35] [Plato] wrote the dialogue, antedating the defeat by a long time. So let us now turn to the beginning of the dialogue. Let us first read it in the translation at the beginning. Meno is speaking.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue can be taught, or is acquired by practice, not teaching? Or if neither by practice nor by learning, whether it comes to mankind by nature or in some other way? (70a1-4)[xxiv]

LS: Ya, "or in any other way." Good. Now this is the beginning. That is a unique case, that a dialogue begins with Socrates being addressed with a question, without any preparation. Why does Meno approach Socrates? Why does he raise the question? We cannot know from this passage itself. Now first let us look at a few passages[36] [in] which Klein makes [some points on this opening question]. First let us read this quite literal translation on page 38, second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The dialogue begins abruptly with Meno asking Socrates: "Can you, Socrates, tell me, is human excellence (*arete*) something teachable? Or, if it is not teachable, is it something to be acquired by training? Or, if it cannot be acquired by training or by learning, does it accrue to men at birth (*phusei*) or in some other way?"
>
> There are two aspects of that question and of the way it is put which strike us, the listeners or readers, immediately.
>
> 1. That the question concerning human excellence should be put by Meno, the notoriously vicious Meno, to Socrates, on whom we tend to look as a memorable example of virtue, although—be it in Athens before or after 399 B.C. or anywhere else today—we do not quite understand his ways and might even entertain some doubts about his wholesomeness and integrity, is startling and comical.
>
> The suddenness of the question heightens its comical character. Nothing appears to precede it. Meno, on a visit to Athens, had met Socrates the day before, as we learn later—[xxv]

[xxiv] Mr. Reinken reads from the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by W. R. M. Lamb (Harvard University Press, 1924).

[xxv] Klein, 38.

LS: But there is no relation [between what transpired at that prior meeting and the question Meno now asks]. Let us read the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> On its own merits, the question is not one to be lightly dismissed. Nor is it confined to a particular time-period or civilization. We are constantly confronted with it, although the terms in which it is phrased vary.[xxvi]

LS: So here Klein alludes to the famous historical question [which], as far as the issue is concerned, is as alive with us if we are serious people as it was in Socrates's time, or at any other time. And the phrasing, as he puts it, may vary. [Although] this is not a negligible question, but a secondary question. Let us read page 40, top.

Mr. Reinken:

> We also learn from Meno[xxvii] that he is not unfamiliar with Socrates' reputation as that of a man who curiously excels in the question-answer game, continually raising difficulties for others as well as himself. Meno wants to be told about the manner in which excellence accrues to men. But the very wording of his question implies that it is meant as a challenge to Socrates, the "quibbler"[xxviii]: "Tell me, if *you* can . . . "
>
> Socrates does not take up the Thessalian's challenge: he does not answer the question at all.[xxix]

LS: Now let us stop there.[37] Let us look at the question first. The question concerns how to become virtuous, how men become virtuous. Klein seems to imply that Meno is not concerned seriously with becoming virtuous, and in that he may be right. But[38] his unconcern with becoming virtuous may very well be due to the fact that he regards himself as already virtuous, of course in his sense of the word "virtue." Now that virtue can have very different meanings is indicated for example in the dialogue *Gorgias*, the speech of Callicles,[39] where justice is utterly rejected as a part of virtue, and yet he means to be virtuous. To mention a more recent example, what Machiavelli understands by virtue is even more remote from what is ordinarily understood by virtue than what Callicles means.

But this makes it all the more strange that he raises this question. Why does Meno approach Socrates with this question? That is a great riddle. Socrates is assaulted, we can say, by Meno. He is compelled to answer this question in one way or another. He is compelled to engage in this conversation. So the *Meno* is a compulsory dialogue. We may distinguish between compulsory and voluntary dialogues. There are dialogues, conversations which Socrates seeks; for example, the *Gorgias* is such a dialogue. And[40] there are compulsory ones, like this one, like the *Euthyphro*—like the *Apology*, of course; the *Apology* is naturally a compulsory dialogue.[41] But the *Banquet* is a voluntary

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[xxvi] Klein, 38.
[xxvii] Klein includes the Stephanus numbers: 79e7-80a2.
[xxviii] Klein's note: Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1491-99.
[xxix] Klein, 40.

dialogue. He is invited to a banquet and gladly goes there. The compulsion[42] here exercised has no parallel elsewhere. Nowhere is Socrates assailed with a general question without any preparation. In[43] the *Euthydemus*,[44] he is also assailed by a question of his friend Crito: Who was it to whom you talked yesterday? Well, this is simply nice gossip. But here is a question of a general nature. Ordinarily Socrates has the initiative and he raises questions after due preparation. There are two dialogues in which Socrates jumps a question at people, at wholly unsuspecting people: the *Minos* and the *Hipparchu*s. But they are now considered spurious. I think they are not spurious, but one reason why they are regarded as spurious is the fact that Socrates as it were puts his finger like Uncle Sam in the wartime posters and says: Did you do your philosophizing today?[xxx] [Laughter] That is not what Socrates ordinarily does.

Now here, in a way, Meno takes the role of Socrates: he is the one who raises the question. It is, to repeat, a dialogue between the virtuous Socrates and the vicious Meno. But it is initiated by Meno, not by Socrates. Socrates does not engage in this conversation in order to convert Meno from vice to virtue.[45] The conversation is sought by Meno. Now[46] Meno speaks of three possibilities in his question. Virtue could be acquired by teaching, by practicing or training, or by nature—meaning coming without any human effort. And he presents these three possibilities as mutually exclusive. Now according to the very common view of Plato and Aristotle and others—according to the commonsense view—all three are needed. You must have some proper equipment: if you are born moronic you can never become virtuous. And you must have learned something, if only the things which you learn as a child: Don't do this, don't do that. And you must train, you must practice virtue: How else can you become virtuous?

Now Meno's question is, as we see here already, very paradoxical. He says either-or: only one of the three can it be. He is "quote sophisticated" compared with the common view. What the worth of this sophistication is, we must wait and see how things develop. We also see that he changes over[47] from learnable to teachable. He assumes that if virtue is learnable, then it must be teachable. Or can there be learning without teaching? Is it possible? Well, I give only one hint now: the very word philosophy, *philosophia*, love of wisdom. If wisdom is not possible but only love for wisdom, striving for wisdom, then there are no teachers. There cannot be teachers of wisdom. But there can be learners directed toward wisdom, and the so-called teacher would be only, say, an older or more experienced learner[48] [than] everyone else. So this much about the initial question. Now let us turn to Socrates's answer.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC]: Meno, of old the Thessalians were famous and admired among the Greeks for their riding and their riches; but now they have a name, I believe, for wisdom also, especially your friend Aristippus's people, the Larisaeans.

LS: Larisa being a town in Thessaly.

[xxx] Strauss is referring to the famous WWI-era "Uncle Sam Wants You" poster, created in 1917 by J. M. Flagg.

Mr. Reinken:

> For this you have to thank Gorgias; for when he came to that city he made the leading men of the Aleuadae—among them your lover Aristippus—and the Thessalians generally enamored of wisdom. Nay more, he has given you the regular habit of answering any chance question in a fearless, magnificent manner, as befits those who know: for he sets the example of offering himself to be questioned by any Greek who chooses, and on any point one likes, and he has an answer for everybody. Now in this place, my dear Meno, we have a contrary state of things: a drought of wisdom, as it were, has come on; and it seems as though wisdom had deserted our borders in favour of yours.

LS: It has migrated, from here to Thessaly. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> You have only to ask one of our people a question such as that, and he will be sure to laugh and say: Stranger, you must think me a specially favoured mortal, to be able to tell whether virtue can be taught, or in what way it comes to one: so far am I from knowing whether it can be taught or not, that I actually do not even know what the thing itself, virtue, is at all. (70a5-71a7)

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here for a moment. So Socrates doesn't answer Meno's question, as we have seen, but he explains the fact of the question, it's reason: that the Thessalian should do these things, what Meno does,[xxxi] is a novelty due to Gorgias, the teacher of rhetoric, who claimed that he could answer any question. That is presented to us in the Platonic dialogue *Gorgias*. Ya, but does Meno claim to be able to answer any question up to this point? He raises a question. So Socrates makes clear how much Meno, who raises a question, differs from Gorgias. Meno is, in a way—he is an ambiguous fellow, closer to Socrates than to Gorgias. Socrates calls him in the first apostrophe "my friend Meno," *phile Menōn*. But nevertheless, Meno is a Gorgian because he believes that there are men who have ready answers to all questions, whereas Socrates says he is an Athenian and the Athenians are too sophisticated to believe that. As he puts it, they laugh about it. You are still living [as] barbarians in the north without the proper sophistication. The Athenians do not even know what virtue is, let alone how it is acquired. By treating Meno as a typical Thessalian, Socrates is then able to present himself as a typical Athenian. It becomes as it were a matter of national character, and this is of course an example of irony, of dissimulation of one's worth. Socrates understates his worth by overstating the worth of the Athenians, and also in another way by overstating of course the worth of Meno and the Thessalians. Now let us see what Mr. Klein has to say, but we cannot read everything. Let us read the last paragraph on page 40.

Mr. Reinken:

> The irony is compounded by the immediately following example given by Socrates to describe the dearth of wisdom in Athens. Nobody, says Socrates, nobody in Athens would react to Meno's question in any other way than by asserting that, far from knowing the manner in which human excellence comes

[xxxi] That is, ask questions.

> into being, he did not even know what, all in all, human excellence was. It was probably fair to assume that, except for Socrates, actually no one in Athens would make such an assertion. Later in the dialogue,[xxxii] we hear Anytus—an Athenian as good as any, even though his reputation may have been somewhat tarnished—claim that any reputable Athenian citizen could teach a man lessons in human excellence, and the implication seems to be that any reputable citizen would know what the subject matter of those lessons is. In point of "wisdom" "Thessaly" and "Athens" seem indeed interchangeable terms.[xxxiii]

LS: Yes. And now let us read only what he says in the sequel under 2, "In describing—"

Mr. Reinken:

> In describing Gorgias' teaching, Socrates, in his choice of words (*to ethos hymas eithiken*) emphatically stresses the point that Gorgias inculcated in his pupils the *habit* of answering questions in a fearless and lofty manner, "as befits those who know (*eidotas*)."[xxxiv]

LS: Ya, now this theme will come up again and again, and we saw already that in Meno's initial question, the training, the practicing, that which has most to do with *ethos*, with the habit, was in the center. This is in a way the crucial point.

Now you will see of course that Socrates knows Meno quite well. He had met him before, as will appear later, but he knows quite well what the situation in Thessaly is. As a matter of fact, later on when in the *Crito* when the question comes up whether he should flee from Athens—you know, escape from prison—Thessaly is considered as a possibility but turned down because of the lawlessness prevailing there. Very wild people.

Another little point. Socrates, when he speaks here of Aristippus, whom he calls first his *hetairos*, his comrade, he makes clear a little bit later that he is a lover of Meno. Meno is the beloved, not the lover. We must keep this in mind; that will come up later on. Good, I think we can leave it at that. And let us now read the conclusion of Socrates's speech.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And I myself, Meno, am in the same case; I share my townsmen's poverty in this matter: I have to reproach myself with an utter ignorance about virtue; and if I do not know what a thing is, how can I know what its nature may be? Or do you imagine it is possible, if one has no cognisance at all of Meno, that one could know whether he is handsome or rich or noble, or the reverse of these? Do you suppose that one could? (71b1-8)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. So you see that the question whether Meno is wise is not even raised and thus in a way [is] tacitly answered. Socrates speaks of his poverty and wisdom. In the *Apology*, when the question of his possible fine comes up, he

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[xxxii] Klein inserts "92e-93a."
[xxxiii] Klein, 40-41.
[xxxiv] Klein, 41.

speaks of his ten thousand-fold poverty; in other words, using a term suggesting wealth: ten thousand. Ten thousand dollars is not nothing, much more in the then-currency. So Socrates has this poverty compared with the wealth of Meno or with the Thessalian upper stratum in general. Now Klein makes here a point which is of very great importance for the rest of the dialogue, on page 42: "the example." Ya?

Mr. Reinken: Yes. "The 'example' adduced by Socrates, with its suggested parallel between "human excellence" and the man Meno, is both ironic and ambiguous."

LS: You see that point. He explains the difficulty by using the example of Meno. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

> Apart from containing a comical challenge to our preconceived image of Meno, it plays with the diversity of words which convey the meaning of "knowing" and with the range that this meaning itself encompasses.
>
> If not to "know" (*gignōskein*) who Meno is means to never to have been introduced to him or never to have heard of him, the "example" is not a valid one. For, even if we do not "know" what human excellence is, we are not unfamiliar with the praise of excellence; we have often enough heard people speak of "excellent" men, and we ourselves have, often enough, joined the chorus or stood aloof, expressing disapproval; we are, however vaguely, acquainted with human excellence, even if we do not "know" (*eidenai*) what it is.
>
> If, on the other hand, not to "know" who Meno is means that, although acquainted with him in some way, we do not have sufficient insight into his character, do not know who he "really" is, we still might "know" a great deal about him and be able to tell about his looks, his habits, his qualities, his faults. But then again, the "example" would not at all show the impossibility of saying anything pertinent about a thing, if "what" it is escapes us, would not show the impossibility of knowing *hopoion ti esti,* if we do not know *ti esti*.[xxxv]

LS: We cannot know of what quality it is if we do not know what it is. Now[49] this is a crucial point. It seems to be only fit for a philosopher to be radical and therefore to say [that] you can't say anything about virtue if you do not[50] first know what virtue is—if you do not begin, to use the traditional expression, with an adequate definition of virtue. And this is questioned by Klein in the spirit of Plato. This radicalism is the opposite of moderation, of being sensible, of what the Greeks call *sophrosyne*. We cannot do that. This is beautifully illustrated in the dialogue *Laches,* where the question is raised: Should a certain kind of military training be practiced or not? And the military experts disagree, one approving, the other disapproving. And Socrates is then dragged in and he says: Well, how can we answer this question, settle the discussion, if we do not know in the first place what courage is? And now they start a conversation about courage, which leads to no answer, and the initial practical question is completely forgotten. Now if you look at it in a political context, if in a city the question of a new kind of weapon or so is discussed, and if all the fundamental questions would have been settled first, the question

[xxxv] Klein, 42.

could never be settled, and in the meantime the enemy might win the war. And you can easily imagine parallel cases of the same kind.

The deeper question is this.[51] In a way, we know. In a way, we know. And this is not negligible: this is the matrix from which all adequate knowledge, if it is accessible to us, would have to come. That is a question with which I dealt in a general way by speaking of the difference between common sense and science. That has something to do with this question here. Can one know anything in the strict sense of knowing, without knowing everything? For example, to know about a dog: you can know a lot about this dog who lives with you, and if you are a biologist especially interested in dogs, you can know a lot about dogs. But that is clearly inadequate. For example, such a thing[52] [as] the origin of the dog species is wound up with the whole question of evolution, which goes much beyond any knowledge of dogs as dogs, but it is implied with it because dogs are living beings. Then the whole question of evolution is linked up with the question of the origin of the universe altogether, and with the infinite questions connected with that. So it is somehow prudent to reckon with the possibility that we can never know anything in the strict sense of the term[53] knowing, if it is indeed true that everything we know about is a part of the whole, which whole we never know adequately. Now in[54] the *Republic*, for example, where the various virtues are discussed, the virtues are presented in the *Republic* as the good states of the soul, of the various parts of the soul. But that makes sense, and Plato or Socrates reaches results which are acceptable. But they suffer only from one flaw, as Socrates himself points out at the end. In order to know the virtues, we must know the soul and its parts: we must know the nature of the soul. But do we possess such knowledge? And at the end of the *Republic* it appears that the whole doctrine of virtue there developed to everyone's satisfaction is based on a very insufficient knowledge of the soul. So the whole ground must be gone over again. This knowledge is not supplied by the *Republic*.

We must stop here. Let us keep in mind this one key point, with a question as a hypothesis: that this is *the* dialogue on virtue, and it is discussed by Socrates with a man who is singularly lacking in virtue—an arch-villain, as Klein calls him. What does this play mean? Why does such a man address Socrates with the question: How is virtue acquired? This is a great[55] riddle, to begin with a complete riddle and we will see whether we will find the answer with the help of Klein, and if that help[56] should prove to be insufficient, we must try another answer.

There is one thing which we can say in advance, however. This does not let any cat out of the bag prematurely. There is another character in the dialogue, Anytus, the accuser of Socrates, the enemy of Socrates, the manifest enemy of Socrates. He doesn't approach Socrates with a question, the arch-villain Meno does. Meno, as I have said, has something in common with Socrates which Anytus does not have. Now what is that? And I will give a present-day answer, a very vulgar term, but unfortunately many[57] of the terms coined in our age are vulgar: he is a cultured man, a cultured man, and therefore he has something in common with Socrates; after all, Socrates also is cultured. Therefore one can say provisionally [that] the theme of the dialogue is: What is the difference between spurious

culture and genuine? But this spurious culture nevertheless is sufficient to function as a bridge between the arch-villain and Socrates. Good.

Well, I hope some questions have arisen in your minds and you will take them up. We can perhaps begin the next meeting with a discussion of the questions.

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[1] Deleted "this will be…."
[2] Deleted "this is…."
[3] Deleted "the Platonic dialogues…."
[4] Deleted "speaks…."
[5] Deleted "because if you…."
[6] Deleted "…in tragedies or comedies."
[7] Deleted "and."
[8] Changed from "That would be various kinds in which…various forms in which this could be done."
[9] Deleted "but."
[10] Deleted "The Platonic…."
[11] Deleted "in…."
[12] Deleted "but this does not yet make it…."
[13] Deleted "to."
[14] Deleted "and the whole…."
[15] Deleted "be…."
[16] Deleted "Does he not have…."
[17] Deleted "understand…to."
[18] Deleted "and so on."
[19] Deleted "must be completed."
[20] Deleted "the question is… ends in despair, so to speak."
[21] Deleted "this."
[22] Deleted "It means…every…the imitated…."
[23] Deleted "…we are."
[24] Changed from "But the other thing, the description of the situation in which this takes place or when we become aware of the fact, for example, that Glaucon is hungry and therefore makes a certain move without this being said, then we smile about this."
[25] Deleted "not merely…."
[26] Deleted "is of course…."
[27] Deleted "There." Moved "must be."
[28] Deleted "it."
[29] Deleted "and."
[30] Deleted "he."
[31] Deleted "..yeah… and not by punishment."
[32] Deleted "Anytus"
[33] Deleted "which."
[34] Deleted "…was."
[35] Deleted "he."
[36] Deleted "which…upon."
[37] Deleted "Now the question…."
[38] Deleted "this may be…."
[39] Deleted "you know."
[40] Deleted "there…."
[41] Deleted "And…."
[42] Deleted "is here exercised…."
[43] Deleted "the *Cratylus*…no, no, not the *Cratylus*…."
[44] Deleted "I think…yes."
[45] Deleted "The dialogue is…."
[46] Deleted "he speaks here of three…."
[47] Deleted "from teachable to,…I'm sorry,."

[48] Deleted “as.”
[49] Deleted “there is a particular….”
[50] Deleted “… have not known.”
[51] Changed from “Can..so in a way we know, and this is not negligible.”
[52] Deleted “about,”
[53] Deleted “in the strict sense of the term.”
[54] Deleted “the case of…In.”
[55] Deleted “…is a.”
[56] Deleted “is not sufficient….”
[57] Deleted “of the present.”

Session 3: no date

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —the conversation is sought by Meno. It is imposed on Socrates by Meno, and therefore [it is] what we call a compulsory, not a voluntary dialogue. And furthermore, Meno jumps at Socrates with his question without any preparation. Hence we do not know why Meno approaches Socrates with his question. Meno is associated with Gorgias, the great teacher of rhetoric. He is cultured. Now is he a culture vulture who is eager to talk to Socrates in order to drop[1] names back home in Thessaly? But there is one reason which speaks against that [suggestion], and that is the paradoxical nature of his question. He asks at once: Is virtue acquired either by teaching, or by practice, or by nature? He excludes the commonsensical view that virtue is acquired by the three things together. Now Socrates's answer is: How can I answer your question, since I do not even know at all what virtue is? How can I say therefore how it is acquired? Now Klein's point, which we read last time, is that this assertion of Socrates cannot be literally true. Everyone knows to some extent what virtue is, otherwise we couldn't talk about it, and this applies of course to Socrates as well. In other words, Socrates may not have knowledge of virtue in the full sense of the term; he cannot help having an opinion about virtue. Now let us assume that full knowledge of anything like virtue is not possible for a man, that man can never have wisdom but can only strive for wisdom, and striving for wisdom means *philosophia*, philosophy. In that case, men, and not even the greatest of men, could ever fully transcend the realm of opinion. Now this we discussed last time, and if there are any questions which you had no time to raise, or no objections which you had no time to raise, do it now.

Student: [What] was the purpose[2] of the introduction about horsemanship?

LS: You mean about the situation in Thessaly?

Same Student: In Thessaly, yeah. Socrates seems to me to be ironic, but[3] I don't understand the import of it.

LS: Well, one point which was made by Klein in his introduction and which is absolutely correct is this, that everything is ironical. Therefore it is of no use to single out particular passages. The only thing one can say [is that] there are some remarks which are ironical and appear to be ironical to the most superficial reader and to the meanest capacity, and others [which] require greater effort to be seen as ironical.[4] But the best thing is always to be a good boy and to take the passages not as ironical but to take them first literally, and [to seek an ironic interpretation] only when you are compelled. Now he says something about Thessaly, namely, about the novelty of intellectual life in Thessaly. Hitherto they were famous for their art of riding on horses and their wealth. And now something else has been added to it because Gorgias came there. Now this is true; I mean, at least I know of nothing which [suggests that it isn't]. But the irony consists in the fact: Is this wisdom which has come to Thessaly through Gorgias right? Ya? And the point which is made here is [that] it seems that Athens is the seat of wisdom and Thessaly is a kind of savage, wild country. And now the situation seems to be reversed: wisdom has left Athens and is now at home in Thessaly. This is all right? Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: In his reply, Socrates only mentions the question of the teachability of virtue; he doesn't mention practice or nature. Why does—

LS: In his answer, you mean—which is this?

Mr. Bruell: The specific lines are—

LS: 71?

Mr. Bruell: Yes, at 4 through 6.

LS: He mentions that only explicitly, but he refers to the others. Yes, now how would you explain that?

Mr. Bruell: Well, for one thing I thought that practice might be a part of teaching, might be understood as that rather than as a distinct alternative.

LS: Now the most simple explanation would be this. Socrates doesn't enumerate the three things; he mentions only one and he mentions that which Meno had mentioned in the first place. And secondly (that can appear only later), it is the most important question, as it will prove to be. Well, simply: if virtue is knowledge, as Socrates seems to hold, then it seems to be closer akin to teaching than to practicing and to being by nature available. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: But if neither Socrates nor anybody whom he has met knows what virtue is, then the teachability would be ruled out immediately, I mean as far as everyone he knows.

LS: Now—well, you refer to the sequel which we have not yet read.

Mr. Bruell: Yes.

LS: Now, but all right, why? I mean, if there is someone who knows what virtue is, why[5] should this lead to the consequence that virtue is not teachable? Let us assume that this individual, in this case Gorgias, says that virtue is knowledge, then it would follow that it is teachable, ya?

Mr. Bruell: Yes, but only if someone knows what it is completely could it be teachable.

LS: Yes. Well, this is a long, long question.[6] I mean, this has been stated in the way of an interpretation about the complexity of knowing it. Hitherto we know only Socrates's bare assertion [that] he does not know what virtue is, and not more. I mean—and only when we go into that and say "Can this be literally true?" do we arrive at this conclusion, so to say, at the infinity of knowledge of virtue.

Mr. Reinken: Will we be making anything of the semi-subtitle, *Peirastikos*?

LS: Well, these subtitles of the Platonic dialogues are almost certainly not Platonic. And this [one] is especially—the subtitles consist of two parts, say, in this case *Meno,* or *On Virtue*. Now[7] the second subtitle is what kind of a dialogue it is. And here this one is called *Peirastikos,* the dialogue which is testing the interlocutor. Others are called ethical, for example, and others are called logical and this kind of thing. Now these latter[8] surely smell much too much of school, post-Platonic school; they are surely not Plato. The other titles, the first subtitles, are useful. They are probably also not Platonic but they nevertheless[9] give us some inkling as to the subject matter in the following sense. There is no dialogue other than the *Meno* which carries the subtitle "On Virtue," and this indicates the particular importance of this dialogue because it is the only one which was given the subtitle by men very familiar with the Platonic writings and not too remote from Plato. On Virtue. So that we can know. Now is there any other point you would—Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I didn't get your point, sir, about the paradoxical character of the opening question and the bearing of that on whether Meno is primarily searching for culture or not.

LS: No, what I said is this.[10] We do not have the slightest notion, of course, as to why Meno approaches Socrates. And the lowest view would be that he is wholly uninterested in this kind of thing, he lacks any serious interest in the thing and he is only a culture vulture. That would be the lowest. But the reason why one can doubt that, why it is not as simple as that, is the paradoxical form of the question which he raises, which implies that he has something more specific in mind than just hearing an answer from Socrates in order then to boast of his conversation with Socrates back in Thessaly.[11] Perhaps [he has] something more specific in mind than just merely hearing Socrates's view. More we cannot say.

Mr. Burnam: I see.

LS: Ya. Yes?

Student: But if Meno's intention is really, let's say, to test Socrates—he says later, well, this is the reputation we'll spread about you back home—this might explain the paradoxical character of the question simply, [and] that doesn't make him a culture vulture trying to show how smart he is.

LS: Yes, that is also a possibility. I mean, only the lowest of the low is excluded. That is all, I understand. Yes, Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: Does[12] Meno's question raise the question also of whether virtue is possible altogether, because if it doesn't come to men in any way—

LS: No. This I think is[13] in no way implied here. He only asks how does it come to men, and this implies *that* it comes to men.[14] And if I may say this in anticipation: Meno is, I think, quite sure that he possesses virtue.[15] But this I say only in anticipation and I should have suppressed that remark. Now, shall we now turn to the sequel? So Socrates has just said that he doesn't know what virtue is, and hence he cannot say whether it is acquired by teaching, or in any other way. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Socrates has asked, "Do you suppose that one could [know]?" Meno says:

> [MEN.] Not I. But is it true, Socrates, that you do not even know what virtue is? Are we to return home with this report of you? (70b9-c2)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here for one moment. Meno admits that one cannot know how virtue is acquired if one does not know what is virtue. But, he implies, everyone knows that. Not to know it is disgraceful. Meno appeals to Socrates's sense of shame, or to his concern with what now would be called his image. Good. Now let us see what Klein has to say on this point, on page 43—only the end of the paragraph at the top.

Mr. Reinken:

> Or may not Meno's surprise be ultimately based on the tacit inference that, since Socrates confesses to this lack of knowledge and blames himself for it he thereby confesses to not being virtuous? Such a confession would indeed be astonishing. We do not often hear people readily and seriously admit their own badness or viciousness.[i]

LS: Ya, but in the present stage, where we know very little of[16] [Socrates] and almost nothing of Meno, we must indeed reckon with the possibility that he regarded Socrates as possibly not virtuous, or vicious. And hence, since he is vicious as we assume, may he not approach Socrates because he is attracted by Socrates's lack of virtue? Would this explain his abrupt beginning: these are the things about which you wouldn't speak? But therefore a silent beginning would be appropriate. But these are of course all questions legitimate at the present state, and [they] will be disposed of more or less while we go on. Now let us read Socrates's answer.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Not only this, my friend, but also that I never yet came across anybody who did know, in my opinion. (71c3-4)

LS: Ya. "I seem to me," namely, "I seem to me never to have met a man who knew." Now "friend" is as good a translation as one can think [of]. The Greek word is *hetaire*, which is not the same as the word ordinarily translated by friend, *philos*. He had called him a friend in the sense before, [so] *hetairos* I would translate[17] by comrade, always to make it clear that it is not the Greek word for friend. It has a political connotation, not of course of our age but rather of the oligarchic cliques and the democratic cliques, and they were called *hetaireiai*, comradeships, and they were *hetairai*. But we have seen that

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[i] Klein, 43. Klein inserts "*emauton katamemphomai*—71 6 2f." after "blames himself for it."

Socrates had spoken in the long speech at the beginning, that the lover of Meno, Aristippus, was Meno's *hetairos*. In other words, it has also this erotic implication. He is somebody different [from a friend].

So this leads then to the question, this erotic implication: Does Socrates love Meno, or Meno love Socrates? Is Meno attracted by Socrates or Socrates attracted by Meno? Socrates is not ashamed of his ignorance, that is the more important point, because as far as he knows all men are ignorant. He has never met one [who isn't]. Now what is the next point?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] What? You did not meet Gorgias when he was here?
> [SOC.] I did.
> [MEN.] And you didn't consider that he knew?
> [SOC.] I have not a very good memory, Meno, so I cannot tell at the moment how he struck me then. It may be that he did know, and that you know what he said: remind me therefore how he expressed it; or if you like, make your own statement, for I expect you share his views.
> [MEN.] I do. (71c5-d3)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates evades the question regarding Gorgias, this great man, and it would be very rude to say [that] Gorgias, even, didn't know. And he rejects this question on the ground of his poor memory.[18] Now Klein makes some points which are crucial for an interpretation and I think to some extent surely correct. [The] bottom of page 43.

Mr. Reinken:

> Socrates' reply is as follows: "I have not the best of memories, Meno, and therefore I can not tell you now how he struck me then. But perhaps indeed he, Gorgias, knows and you (*kai sy*) as well (*te*), know what he, Gorgias, said. Remind me then of what he said; or, if you please, say it yourself; for your opinions, I suppose, are very much his." Meno: "Yes."
> This almost literal translation omits the puns contained in the first sentence and does not do justice to the special paratactic character of the second.
> The literal assertion in the phrase*: ou pany eimi mnēmōn*, I have not the best of memories, is, no doubt, a part of Socrates' ironic "code," as Alcibiades, for one, in the *Protagoras*[ii] well knows.[iii]

LS: I mean, in other words, a self depreciation: the understating of his worth, in the elementary sense of ironic. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> But in the texture (and sound) of the fuller phrase: *Ou pany eimi mnēmōn, ō Menōn,* there seems to be embedded more than one pun and more than one pertinent connotation.

[ii] Klein gives the Stephanus number in a footnote: 336d 2-4 (cf. 334c8-d5).
[iii] Klein, 43-44.

> In the first place, we cannot help remembering that, according to Cornelius Nepos,[iv] to Plutarch,[v] and to others, *Mnēmōn* was the nickname of King Artaxerxes II. The phrase could, therefore, be also understood as saying: "I am not quite Artaxerxes, Meno."

LS: That is then developed later. In other words, as he says at the end of this paragraph, "I, Socrates, am not going to torture or to kill you, Meno' or 'You, Meno, will not succeed in eluding me.'" Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Such ironic implications, anticipating Meno's future, are, of course, beyond Meno's reach, but are understandable to us, the listeners or readers. And we should not disregard the possible further implication that Socrates might yet prove to be a more redoubtable foe of Meno than the Great King himself.
> In the second place, the words ". . . *mnēmōn, ō Menōn"* form a curious jingle. Playing with names is a common pastime and, throughout the Platonic dialogues, names, characters and roles are playfully attuned to each other in all kinds of modes. The name "Meno," by itself, could be associated with the stem of *menein* ("to stay as before," "to stay put"—generally not in a pejorative sense) and[19] this association might be meaningful in the context of the dialogue.[vi]

LS: In other words, Meno is a man who stays. And he takes a stand: he doesn't run away. That would be the positive sense. The negative sense would be something like being immovable. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> But the core of that jingle seems to be the combination of letters *m* and *n*, the Indo-European stem of so many words related to our power of remembering and recollecting as[20] the words: *mnēmē, memini, mens,* mind. We note that in the name "Meno" the sequence of those two letters is somewhat deranged.[vii]

LS: Now that is a point which he will develop later, and which I will not anticipate now. I think we should only read the last paragraph, four, paragraph four on this page. "The question arises—

Mr. Reinken:

> The question arises whether Socrates' suggestion, accepted by Meno himself, that Meno's opinions are very much those of Gorgias, provides us for the first time, or does not provide us at all, with an important insight into Meno's character. For most opinions of most of us—and not only those of Meno—are derived from, and

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[iv] A Roman historian. Klein gives the reference: *De regibus*, 1, 3-4.
[v] Klein gives the reference: *Life of Artaxerxes*, I.
[vi] Klein, 44-45.
[vii] Klein, 45.

> identical with, opinions of "somebody else." The accumulation of such opinions is what is generally called "education."[viii]

LS: Yes. A true word. Now Meno (that is what Klein suggests here very provisionally) is the rememberer, and that throws a light on his character. The question is: Is this true, is this the first clue regarding his character? Surely Meno does not present himself as a Gorgian who has derived his opinion from Gorgias but rather as a man, standing on his own feet, who agrees with Gorgias. Now that is surely the case. Now let us read the sequel, the next speech.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then let us pass him over, since in fact he is not present, and do you tell me, in heaven's name—

LS: No. By the gods; I call on the gods. Yes.

Mr. Reinekn:

> By the gods, what is your own account of virtue.

LS:[21] What [you say] virtue [is].

Mr. Reinken:

> Speak out frankly, that I may find myself the victim of a most fortunate falsehood.

LS: Speak and do not begrudge me, do not envy me. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> Do not begrudge me, that I may find myself the victim of a most fortunate falsehood, if you and Gorgias prove to have knowledge of it, while I have said that I never yet came across anyone who had. (71d4-8)

LS: So let's forget about Gorgias. Yet in hearing Meno's view—that is emphasized again by Socrates—we shall hear also Gorgias. For some reason, Socrates is concerned with Gorgias's view. Perhaps because it is important that Meno is only a mouthpiece, or follower, of Gorgias. And that may imply that he is altogether a mouthpiece or follower of what other people say. Here occurs the first oath, as we have seen, and this is made by Socrates. Ordinarily one or another of the interlocutors swears and Socrates follows the precedent, but in this dialogue Socrates begins the swearing. By hearing Meno we shall hear a knower, because he knows what virtue is, and that means a blessed being, 71a3,[ix] surpassing ordinary humans, perhaps even surpassing outstanding humans, *hombres*. The gods are said [by the Greeks] to be envious[22]. Socrates begs Meno not to be envious, not to begrudge him, so that Socrates too will become a knower, a blessed being. The bliss will be due to Socrates's good luck, to the *tuchē* that he met Meno, or rather that Meno

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[viii] Klein, 45.

[ix] Referring to Socrates's earlier comment to Meno that should Meno ask anyone in Athens about virtue, the person would reply that Meno must think him a "blessed sort."

raised his question, or rather that he, Socrates, said the untruth by saying that he who had met Gorgias had never met anyone who knew what virtue is. Socrates's error is most lucky: it is a blessing in disguise. Socrates's opinion proved to be much too "quote pessimistic." There are quite a few people around, at least Gorgias and Meno, who know what virtue is. Now let us read the sequel. Meno gives now his answer.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Why, there is no difficulty, Socrates, in telling. First of all, if you take the virtue of a man, it is easily stated that a man's virtue is this—that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. Or take a woman's virtue: there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband. And the child has another virtue—one for the female, and one for the male; and there is another for elderly men—one, if you like, for freemen, and yet another for slaves. And there are very many other virtues besides, so that one cannot be at a loss to explain what virtue is; for it is according to each activity and age that every one of us, in whatever we do, has his virtue; and the same, I take it, Socrates, will hold also of vice. (71e1-72a5)

LS: Yes. Now we see that Meno does not explicitly state that this is Gorgias's view; but he states it as *the* view. Now this is the first answer to the question of what virtue is. As Socrates shows immediately afterward, it is not an answer at all, for it is a mere enumeration of virtues instead of telling us what is virtue. Furthermore, we see at once that the enumeration is not ordered. For example, there is no provision made for the virtue of young slaves, only for elderly slaves, male or female. There is also silence on the fact that the man is good at helping himself.[23] It is said [only] that he can prevent being harmed; it is not said that he can [benefit himself]; but it is reasonable, it is very clear that it is the first ingredient of the man, that he can take care of himself also by getting the things which he likes.

Now while this is no definition of virtue in any precise sense of the word, yet nevertheless it implies such a definition.[24] There is another case, a very clear case of this kind in the dialogue *Euthyphro*, where Euthyphro is asked what piety is; and he says: Well, piety, that is what I am doing now, namely, to accuse his father because he had committed a wrong. Now clearly that is not a definition of piety. And nevertheless, if you look more closely you will see it contains a notion of piety which is never discussed in the dialogue, and this doesn't mean that it is unimportant, but it means that it is important. As in this case in the *Euthyphro*, as appears from Euthyphro's reasoning, the justification for this atrocious thing, that he acts as accuser of his father—atrocious according to the then-prevailing views, at least—is justified by him [in maintaining] that he does to his father what Zeus did to his [father], Cronos, i.e., if we state it in general terms, piety[25] [consists] in doing what the gods do, in imitating the gods' acts in contradistinction to doing what the gods tell men to do. You must admit that's a very grave assertion, and it is not discussed in the dialogue; but if one keeps in mind that

undiscussed and only implicit view of piety, one reaches a better understanding of the problem of piety than otherwise.

Now what is here implied? What is common to all these cases which he mentions here? He says there is not *the* virtue, at least by implication. There is the virtue of man, the virtue of a slave, the virtue of woman, and so on and so on. What is common to all? Yes?

Student: The doing of one's work well.

LS: Doing one's work. Let us be careful. Doing one's specific work. The specific work of a man is different from that of a woman, and different from that of a child, and of a freeman different from that of a slave, and[26] [so on]. Yes. Now what [does] this [mean], however, to do one's own work? What is that, as we know from other Socratic utterances in Plato? What is doing one's work?

Student: Justice.

LS: Justice. So Meno implies, but only implies that virtue is justice.

Student: In the *Republic*?

LS: In the *Republic*. But he only implies it. We can, using Platonic language,[27] say [that] he divines [but] doesn't see clearly that virtue is justice. Now you will see, when you look at the statement, that[28] in the case of the woman he says [that] her virtue consists in administering well the household. He does not say of the man that his virtue consists in administering well the city. Well, in the definition of justice in the *Republic*, this adverb "well" is also omitted, so this leads immediately into a deeper stratum, into which I cannot follow it now. But[29] [Meno] speaks of "well" in the case of what the man does to his friends. He does them well. And he of course does evil to his enemies; that goes without saying.

Now this view of men's virtue—doing well to one's friends and ill to one's enemies—is one view of justice stated in the *Republic* in the first book by Polemarchus—but not as the definition of virtue, but as the definition of justice. So much is the question of justice present here, although Meno is not quite aware of it. In the case of the woman, there is nothing said about her doing ill to anybody. That is also an interesting implication—not that Meno believes that there are never women who do not do evil or speak evil, which is a way of doing evil to someone else. No, but then it is of course a vice in the case of a woman, but in the case of man it is a virtue. Doing ill is a part of a *man's* virtue. Man's virtue means in Greek *andreia*,[30] manliness, which we ordinarily translate by courage. A woman should not be manly; that goes without saying. Now you see also a[31] strange change in the order. First [Meno speaks of the] virtue of man, then [the] virtue of woman, and then the virtue of a child, female or male. [In this second list], female comes first. This alludes to the fact of the difference between the two kinds of virtues. He speaks later on of the virtue of an older man and of a slave, separately, [which] shows that Meno understood by a man, of course, a man in his prime and a freeman. [32]One always

understands by a thing, whichever the thing may be, the thing in its completeness, in its most perfect form. Ya? To take a very simple example, when you say: I walked on the Midway and I saw people standing there, and if these people were only children, you would never say: I saw people there. You would say children. And if there were only women, you would not say people but women. But if there are men only, or men and women, you would say people. And also one could illustrate it in other ways, and this simple usage points to what Plato [means here], and to the center of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, as we will perhaps see on other occasions.

Now this speech of Meno almost begins and almost ends with "O Socrates."[33] Now it is very difficult, and hopelessly difficult, to explain whether the apostrophe is used in all cases. But here perhaps it is not too difficult to understand.[34] These apostrophes can mean very different things in very different contexts, as you would easily find out if you reflect on your own doings. Now in the first case, when he [says at the beginning] "Oh, that's not difficult to say, Socrates," then it approaches the meaning, "Oh that's elementary, my dear Watson." But at the end, it has rather a different meaning. This is: "and the same is true of vice, Socrates."[x] You see? Just as there is the virtue of a man, which I have defined, there is also a vice of a man: Socrates, you ought to have the virtue of your age. You are an old man, and what[35] [are] you still talking around with boys? Perhaps you possess only the vice of a slave, of a man who cannot take care of himself—an accusation hurled at Socrates by Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Now[36] [if] this is so, from Meno's point of view Socrates is very likely to lack virtue. But that would of course mean that he lacks the virtue which Meno admires and which Meno claims, believes [himself] to possess. So Socrates would indeed be vicious from Meno's point of view, but not from the point of view which I hope we all have of virtue. Now let me see whether there is any point of Klein's which we should read. Page 47, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> Meno's statement is meant to represent, if we remember what was said before, not only Meno's but also Gorgias' view. It does not show much of Gorgias' eloquence except for the studied facility with which it is uttered. The subject does not seem to require any special rhetorical effort. The view expressed here agrees with commonly accepted, in not always clearly stated, standards, and the terms in which it is expressed agree, in their ambiguity, with those used in common speech. What is said by Meno, and meant by Gorgias, "stands to reason."[xi]

LS: Yes. That is clear. Everyone can see that. But Socrates finds a difficulty here which is not clear to everybody. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC]: I seem to be in a most lucky way, Meno; for in seeking one virtue I have discovered a whole swarm of virtues there in your keeping. Now, Meno, to follow this figure of a swarm, suppose I should ask you what is the real nature of the bee—

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[x] 72a 4-5.

[xi] Klein, 47.

LS: No that is not—ya, well, this word has caused a great [deal of] difficulty. The Greek word is *ousia*, which has traditionally become something like essence, and it might be better to use that, although it is very inadequate. We shall speak of that later.

Mr. Reinken:

> what is the essence of the bee, and you replied that there are many different kinds of bees, and I rejoined: Do you say it is by being bees that they are of many and various kinds and differ from each other, or does their difference lie not in that, but in something else—for example, in their beauty or size or some other quality? Tell me, what would be your answer to this question?
> [MEN.] Why, this—that they do not differ, as bees, the one from the other.
> [SOC.] And if I went on to say: Well now, there is this that I want you to tell me, Meno: what do you call the quality by which they do not differ, but are all alike? You could find me an answer, I presume?
> [MEN.] I could. (72a6-c5)

LS: Yes. Now let us first—Klein makes here a number of remarks which are very helpful for our purpose, [37]but we cannot [read all of it].[38] Let us read a bit of it, beginning with the new paragraph there.

Mr. Reinken:

> Socrates is not satisfied with Meno's statement because it does not answer the question that he, Socrates, has raised. Socrates' question "what is *aretē?*" whatever else may be said about it, tends, in its "simplicity," to cut across the unavoidable ambiguities of what is commonly accepted both in speech and in fact. That makes the question itself rather dark for our common understanding, and require, for the sake of elucidation, a special rhetorical effort on Socrates' part.[xii]

LS:[39] You remember what was said before about the power of the technical vocabulary stemming primarily from Aristotle, [but] of course prepared by Plato. And therefore such words like real nature, like essence, like definition, are easily intelligible, superficially intelligible at least, to everyone. Now here this cannot[40] be presupposed because the discussions antedate the emergence of logic and the teachability of logic completely, of course. But the fact that [when somebody asks us for a definition] we understand this at once doesn't mean that we understand better, [but] only that we have a certain superficial skill which no one, surely not a man like Meno, and many better men than Meno, lacked. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> It seems, says Socrates, that a huge piece of good luck has struck him, since—

[xii] Klein, 47.

LS:[41] Socrates, who [just] before [in 71d5-10] had already said [that he] must have had a piece of good luck [in learning that his] answer—that there was no one in [his] opinion who knows what virtue is—[was erroneous]. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> "since, searching for one *aretē*—"

LS: *Aretē* is the Greek word for virtue. That—we don't have to say all the time.

Mr. Reinken:

> he has found a swarm of virtues. Where? In Meno's keeping. (Meno surrounded by Virtues!) The image of a "swarm" leads Socrates on. He proposes to clarify his question by repeating it with regard to bees; what precisely do we mean by "bee"? What is "bee"? Now, the way this auxiliary question is put to Meno is characterized by two rhetorical devices which seem to serve the same purpose. (1) Socrates is phrasing the question *melittēs peri ousias ho ti pot' esti*, introduces a word that has an unusual, a non-colloquial meaning; he embodies within the question, in three hypothetical clauses, an imaginary exchange between him and Meno, patterned on the previous exchange, and he continues in this hypothetical mode even after Meno has spoken his part.[xiii]

LS: Now we come to this word which was translated as "the real nature" and which I suggested we could loosely[42] [translate by] essence. But now Klein goes somewhat deeper. Please.

Mr. Reinken: "*Ousia*—"

LS: *Ousia*.[xiv]

Mr. Reinekn:

> "*Ousia*" [long iota][xv], "*ousia*," "beingness" or simply "being," has the flavor of a "technical" term, that is, of a term coined to signify aspects of things which are usually not touched upon in common speech and which come into sight only after searching reflection and repeated investigation. The beingness of a bee is not the subject matter of ordinary discourse, where *ousia* has a simple and easily communicable meaning (with which the "technical" meaning is ultimately connected); searching reflection and repeated investigation, on the other hand, are the bases of any *technē,* any "discipline," any "science."[xvi]

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. What does he mean[43] [by] the ordinary meaning? He doesn't explain. And this distinction between the technical and ordinary meaning is familiar to us today as the distinction between science and common sense, or

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[xiii] Klein, 47.
[xiv] Strauss corrects Mr. Reinken's pronunciation.
[xv] Mr. Reinken clarifies his pronunciation.
[xvi] Klein, 47-48.

in the so-called analytical school, between colloquial language and scientific language. Now Meno has heard the word *ousia* many times in the non-technical sense, and there it means simply what belongs to a man, preferably the landed property, what belongs to a man. That property, especially the landed property, make[s] him a man, an *hombre*. So this implies then that *ousia* is that by virtue of which he is what he is, and this can then be enlarged. And here is where the more technical meaning comes in, so that *ousia* is that by virtue of which *anything* is what it is, whether it is a table, or an ashtray, or a dog, whatever it may be. But with this point, however, and that is the riddle: that by virtue of which a thing is what it is—a dog, an ashtray—is that by virtue of which it belongs to a class. So we say these days: This is a dog. [It] belongs to the class of dogs; and that which gives a being its character, as we may say, has a character of a class character. How this is connected, what this means, we must leave open for the time being. Now let us first proceed.

Mr. Reinken:

> 2. The device—not unusual with Socrates—of condensing an exchange into a series of hypothetical clauses deprives the conversation of its directness and removes it to a "methodical" (or "topical") level, again characteristic of a *technē,* and does this, it should be noted, independently of [the] cogency of the argument itself.[xvii]

LS: Now[44] what he has in mind is the simple, very frequent occurrence in a Platonic dialogue, which we may call a dialogue within the dialogue. That Socrates says: Now if someone would ask you this and this question, what would you say? And of course the question arises: Why does he remove [himself and his interlocutors from] the conversation and introduce a non-present, anonymous man? And Klein says this removal from the primary level of exchange between Socrates and Meno has something to do, has some kinship with the difference between common parlance and technical parlance. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Bees, the argument runs, may differ from each other in color, size and other respects, but they do not differ in their being bees[xviii]. What, then, is that in virtue of which they are all the same[xix], namely "bee"? The direct and taunting question is put to Meno: "You could, couldn't you, give me an answer to that?" And Meno's reply is: "I could."
>
> He could perhaps. But some doubt is permitted on his point. To tell what is common to all bees and, by the same token, what differentiates all bees from anything else, that is to "define" what "bee" is, is not any easy task. Quite apart from the difficulty that "queens" and "drones" pose in this case, such "defining" presupposes the agreed acceptance of a much larger frame within which the

[xvii] Klein, 48.
[xviii] Klein gives the Greek: (*toi mellitas einai*).
[xix] Klein gives the Greek: (*hōi . . . tauton eisin hapasai*)

> defining takes place—as all known classifications of living beings show—and ultimately perhaps agreement on the structure of the entire universe.[xx]

LS: Now that is the great question of the whole and the parts, of which we have spoken and to which we shall have to return. If this is so, then strictly speaking any true definition would require knowledge of the whole. And if we do not possess knowledge of the whole, then we can never reach a true definition. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Does Socrates want us to understand the immensity of the problem by picking bees as an example[xxi]? The difficulty of defining is hardly lessened in the case of "human excellence." Meno, apparently misled by Socrates' taunting question about so "trivial" an example, is probably guilty of too great a rashness in letting Socrates have his way. *We* should be on our guard. And we should not overlook at least one considerable difference between "bee" and "excellence"; the latter has its counterpart in "insufficiency" or "badness," but with the possible exception of a drone there is no counterpart to a bee.

LS: Now I have said here [that] there is a dialogue here within a dialogue, a fictitious dialogue, we can say, if we take the dialogue between Meno and Socrates as a non-fictitious dialogue, which it is supposed to be. I mean, just as when reading a novel[45] we must disregard to some extent the fact that it is a piece of fiction, [since] we must take it seriously. But here there is really a fiction. But in this case here in the *Meno*, the questioner in the fictitious dialogue is Socrates himself, not someone else, as it ordinarily is. In the other cases, when Socrates introduces a fictitious interlocutor, then the most simple explanation is that he wishes to spare the interlocutor's feeling[s]. As it were, he, Socrates, and the interlocutor are in the same boat over against this X, who is a kind of super-Socrates, who looks down as much on Socrates as on the other fellow. Now here Socrates obviously doesn't mean[46] [this], because he is himself the interlocutor or the questioner in the fictitious dialogue. Socrates is not eager to spare Meno's feelings. And he does not present himself as questioned together with Meno by an X. Now bees are not the easiest case because of the great variety within the species, so it would be easier to define dogs and cats than bees, because we don't have the case of drones. Now this has something to do with our question here, because the variety among the bees is very small compared with the variety within the human race, and therefore it prepares in a way the whole discussion of virtue.

[xx] This sentence is correct. Mr. Reinken must have been reading from a corrected text, as this change appears in the University Chicago edition, published in 1998. How Reinken had this text in 1966 is a mystery to me, however. (Ed.) Beginning with "as all known classifications," the remainder of the sentence is a correction of the original edition.

[xxi] In continuing on with Klein, Mr. Reinken skips: "We wonder, moreover, whether it is only the image of a "swarm" that leads Socrates to confront Meno with the problem of defining—'bee.' Should we neglect the opinion according to which bees are incapable of learning?" Then he reads this sentence, which is not in the original edition and is in the 1998. Another mystery. (Ed.)

Now as Klein refers in a footnote to a passage in the *Phaedo*, 82a-c, where Socrates speaks of what becomes of men after death. And he distinguishes between various kinds of men. The best fate is of course reserved for the philosophers. They come to the place of the gods. And then others are transformed into various kinds of beasts. Tyrants become wolves, and another kind of men become bees, or wasps, or ants.[47] These are the men who are nice in a lowly sense, the men who possess justice and moderation in the ordinary sense of the term, the vulgar sense of the term,[48] [but possess] no wisdom and no courage. Meno of course is very far away from [49]this kind of people. But we must raise this question: Is the philosopher simply a bee or ant, as it were glorified? Does he not in his way look down on this kind of vulgar virtue as much as a tyrant does in his [way]? This is a great question, the whole question of virtue in any deeper sense of the word and what is ordinarily understood by virtue.

I have said the first answer of Meno to the question of what virtue is has an implication of the greatest importance, namely, that virtue is justice. Of course, whether this is a sufficient understanding of justice is another matter, but Meno divines that [there is some connection between virtue and justice]. Now why does Socrates not help Meno to bring out the implication of his answer?[50] This would lead to the *Republic*; we would be driven into this whole argument: What is virtue, and is it sufficiently defined by [the statement] that everyone does the job for which he is fitted by his age and by his social condition? Good. Now let us now turn to the sequel, 72c6.

Mr. Reinken:

> You could find me an answer, I presume?
> [MEN.] I could.
> [SOC.] And likewise also with the virtues, however many and various they may be, they all have one common character whereby they are virtues, and on which one would of course be wise to keep an eye when one is giving a definitive answer to the question of what virtue really is. You take my meaning, do you not?
> [MEN.] My impression is that I do—

LS: "I seem to understand." I seem to understand. So he is a bit more cautious.

Mr. Reinken:

> I seem to understand; but still I do not yet grasp the meaning of the question as I could wish. (72c6-d2)

LS: Ya, now here is another term which is intelligible in a way to Meno because it is an ordinary Greek term, and yet which[51] has a peculiar Platonic meaning or Socratic meaning of which Meno is of course unaware. He had spoken before of the *ousia*, of the beingness, as one can translate it; and now he speaks of the one *eidos*, literally translated the shape, the appearance of the thing—I mean, the looks of the thing. That is what it means. But it became then the term for what is known traditionally as an idea, and the relation between these two things is dark,[52] and[53] we [can] discuss it later [only to some extent]. Now the shape, the face, the looks of a thing, but in this strange sense that it is the look, the looks of a class of things, not of this or that individual—this *eido*s, this is the

cause, the reason why something is this and that. The *eidos* of dog is the reason why this dog is a dog, which sounds very strange and unintelligible to us for an additional reason which has to do with the modern tradition.

I will explain this very briefly. In one of Moliere's comedies, in the *Malade Imaginaire,* which contains a criticism befitting a comedy of traditional medicine and of traditional science altogether, there at the examination in the Sorbonne, the traditional university, the young doctor or would-be doctor is asked: Why does opium make us sleep? And the answer, the scholastic answer given is: Because it possesses a *virtus dormitiva*, the power of making asleep. [Laughter] Terribly funny and many generations have laughed about it. But there is something beyond the comic poet's joke which is not unimportant.[54] If you know that opium has a power of making you sleep, you cannot [therefore] make opium; that goes without saying.[55] But why are we interested in opium ordinarily? What gives opium its character? There cannot be a better answer for practical purposes than to say it possesses the power to [induce] sleep. If we did not know this in the first place, the question of its so-called causal explanation in terms of [the] out-of-which it can be made or by what actions it can be produced would be without any guidance whatever. So the cause *par excellence* is the *eidos*—traditionally, the essence, as Plato and Aristotle said. To be means to be something. To be means to be something. And this something is what gives the thing its character. There is no being which is not being something,[56] [and] if this question should arise it would require a proper preparation.

Now let me make this clear by an example taken from classical philosophy: atomism. One can say that the atomist says to be means to be an atom, because everything else, whether it is this chair or an animal, is only as an atomic compound. And only an atom is indestructible and imperishable. And there are various kinds, shapes, forms of atoms, and size[s], and so on. There is also the void, which is however nothing, which is and which is not. It must be, otherwise there would be nothing in which the atoms could move, for example. All things are atomic compounds: to say what a thing is would mean to say what sort of atomic compound it is. Then you have true knowledge, scientific knowledge of it. For example, this bird here: I would have to know its atomic composition, [and] then I know it completely and exactly. But before we can know the atomic composition, we know that it is a bird, or a dog, a hawk, whatever it may be. The formula stating its atomic composition is meaningless to us if we do not know that it is the formula for the hawk. That is our primary understanding, and everything else depends on that. Klein makes clear in[57] [his] comment to this passage which you might read on pages 49 to 51, that *eidos*, the term used here, does not simply belong to common sense, although it is used commonsensically, but presupposes a specific reflection. And the point which he makes is that this reflection which leads from the ordinary understanding of *eidos* to this Platonic understanding is radically different from the scientific reflection, not only in modern science but also in ancient mathematics. We drop this now and return to the text: 72d4.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Is it only in the case of virtue, do you think, Meno, that one can say there is one kind belonging to a man, another to a woman, and so on with the rest, or is

> it just the same, too, in the case of health and size and strength? Do you consider that there is one health for a man, and another for a woman? Or wherever we find health, as it is of the same character universally, in a man or anyone else?
> [MEN.] I think that health is the same, both in man and in woman.
> [SOC.] Then is it not so with size and strength also? If a woman is strong, she will be strong by reason of the same form and the same strength; by "the same" I mean that strength does not differ as strength, whether it be in a man or in a woman. Or do you think there is any difference?
> [MEN.] I do not.
> [SOC.] And will virtue, as virtue, differ at all whether it be in a child or an elderly person, in a woman or in a man?
> [MEN.] I feel somehow, Socrates, that here we cease to be on the same ground as in those other cases. (72d3-73a5)

LS: The case of virtue is different from the case of health and so on. [58]Socrates illustrates now the question of the unity for which he seeks by the example of health, tallness, and strength, which [are], we can say, the virtues of the body. Meno accepts Socrates's assertion in this respect, but not as regard[s] the virtues proper. Now of course the question arises: Is he right in accepting Socrates's assertion regarding the virtues of the body? Tallness is in the center, but Socrates is least explicit about tallness. [59]Do we not understand by a tall woman, [for example], something different than by a tall man? Is man not supposed to be taller than woman? And how far does this affect the meaning of tallness? But that is not the point. Why does Meno reject Socrates's assertion regarding virtues proper, namely, [by denying] that there[60] must be a unity there? You see the last question of Socrates, when he speaks of the difference in woman and man and child and in an old man, Socrates is silent about the virtues of the slave here. It is possible that Meno is so unwilling to grant that there is one virtue because he thinks especially of the difference between slaves and freemen, and that there could be one virtue for all men conflicts with his certainty that the difference between freemen and slaves is so radical. The strength and health of a slave may be the same as that of a freeman—presumably both may suffer from a cold; there is no difference in this respect—and slaves can be stronger than many freemen and so; that we all know. But how can the virtue of the slave be the same [as the virtue] of a freeman? Think of such an expression like servility, which is derived from *servus*, slave. Now servility is obviously a vice—it means slavishness—but for a slave it would [not] be: he has to be servile, otherwise he will not be a slave and cannot be a good slave. The oneness of virtue may seem to demand the abolition or the disregard of slavery, or the denial of the virtue of slaves. A virtuous slave would no longer be a slave. Perhaps Meno is so obstinate because he is so deeply impressed by the differences between the virtues of the various kinds of human beings. That may be the reason. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Why? Were you not saying that a man's virtue is to manage a state well—

LS: The city. Ya . . . Yes. Begin again.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Why? Were you not saying that a man's virtue is to manage a city well, and a woman's a house?
> [MEN.] I was.
> [SOC.] And is it possible to manage a city[xxii] well, or a house, or anything at all, if you do not manage it temperately and justly?
> [MEN.] Surely not.
> [SOC.] Then whoever manages temperately and justly will manage with temperance and justice?
> [MEN.] That must be.
> [SOC.] Then both the woman and the man require the same qualities of justice and temperance—

LS: It is the same: in spite of that great difference between them, it is the same thing which makes them virtuous. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> if they are to be good.
> [MEN.] Evidently.
> [SOC.] And what of a child or an old man? Can they ever hope to be good if they are intemperate and unjust?
> [MEN.] Surely not.
> [SOC.] Only if they are temperate and just?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] So all mankind are good in the same way; for they become good when they acquire the same qualities.
> [MEN.] So it seems.
> [SOC.] And I presume, if they had not the same virtue, they would not be good in the same way.
> [MEN.] No, indeed. (73a-c5)

LS: Now let us stop here. But first Mr. Bruell, what was your point?

Mr. Bruell: Well, it was about a previous passage.

LS: All right.

Mr. Bruell: Could you just explain a little bit more why that example[61] using height is so ambiguous, [and] why Socrates used [it]? I mean, the ambiguity seems to be emphasized because when he spoke of the bees, height was one of the differentiating factors—height and beauty—but now it's—

LS: Ya, but there he had spoken of size and beauty, and he doesn't speak of beauty here, does he? So he replaces beauty by health plus strength. And this would mean according to the ordinary practice that[62] beauty is exchangeable with health plus strength.

[xxii] In original: "state." Mr. Reinken follows Strauss's injunction to translate *polis* as "city."

Mr. Bruell: There's something similar to that even going back further, because for Meno the different[63] factors were beauty, wealth, and noble birth. Beauty was the same between Meno and the bees, but then strength—

LS: I see. Ya, this is surely worth considering. I do not have a ready answer.

Mr. Bruell: But my question was more just about what you brought up, that height somehow seems very ambiguous.

LS: Ya, tallness. Tallness would be the—well, literally translated it is greatness, of course, *megas* is great. But greatness—"bigness"; but bigness wouldn't be a good word [either, as] when you say a big man you do not necessarily mean that he is very tall, do you?

Mr. Bruell: Well, it implies—

LS: It doesn't mean the bulk as it would—

Mr. Bruell: It means both.

LS: Ya. Well, let us postpone that, and I will think it over. Now you see now in Socrates's question here in 73a, when he imputes to Meno that he had said the virtue of a man consists in well administering the city, Meno doesn't notice any difference between what he had said—administering the city—and therefore he does not in any way protest. The main point of Socrates's argument is this. Granted that[64] different kinds of human beings have different works, different jobs, no one can do his job well without doing it temperately, moderately, and justly. Well, for example, take a carpenter. If he is drunk most of the time, he cannot do his work well. And if he is not just, if he cheats his customers, this will also affect his work. And the conclusion from all this is that the virtue which we presuppose in all human beings, whatever their job or age may be, is temperance plus justice. I ordinarily translate the Greek word *sōphrosynē* by moderation, moderation and justice. Is this a necessary consequence: that if no one can do his job well—[65]if virtue means doing one's job well, but no one can do his job well without justice and moderation, does it follow that virtue is identical with moderation and justice? No. So it would be only a condition but not the essence of virtue, just as one cannot do one's job well without being healthy in many cases, and yet no one would say that doing one's job well is the same as being healthy. (One second, will you?)[xxiii] One must, in order to do one's job well,[66] also be competent, whatever the job may be. The Greek word for that loosely would be *sophos*, wise. Wisdom is also necessary. And of course, if it is the job of a man he must be manly: think of fighting. These virtues are characteristically not mentioned by Socrates, wisdom and manliness, but only moderation and justice, to which Socrates in a way alludes by the example of the bees, as I showed through the parallel in the *Phaedo*.

[xxiii] Strauss's tone and the context indicate that this appeal is directed to an unnamed student who is anxious to ask a question.

Now how does it come that this reasoning convinces Meno of the fact that virtue is one? Obviously Socrates makes a dent, doesn't he? Well, because he knows this: that all human beings are expected to be temperate and just. Slaves are again disregarded, and that may make it easier for Meno to agree, if the difference between the slaves and the freemen is so crucially important. I may point out to you that the central scene, in a way, of this dialogue is a conversation between Socrates and a slave, where the slave boy proves to be superior to his master, Meno. So the problem of slave and freeman is very much present in this book. Good.

But how does Meno know that all men are expected to be moderate and just? How does he know that? He says "necessarily" even in [73]b2. How does he know that? Well, does he know that from Gorgias? No, not from Gorgias but—

Mr. Reinken: Probably spanked into him.

LS: Ya, but surely also we can say he has heard it from other people. He is not likely to have heard that from Gorgias. And so the interesting problem would be this: If he is really vicious, as we have to assume somehow, then he knows the vicious opinions; he knows also the virtuous opinions, but he remembers the vicious opinions better than the virtuous opinions.[67] He has to be reminded of[68] [the virtuous opinions] by Socrates, whereas the others he remembers without any reminding. Now someone raised his finger; was it Mr. Burnam—someone sitting there?

Mr. Burnam: Well, I was going to ask just one question. It seemed to me also that Socrates's argument isn't correct because it just pushes the question back a step. In other words, he is trying to argue that virtue is the same in a man or woman or a slave, and he says: Well, if they're to do their job well, they require temperance and justice. And that raises the question of whether those particular virtues are the same in a—

LS: You mean whether they are not affected by the fact that here it is a woman's moderation, and there it is a man's moderation?

Mr. Burnam: Yes.

LS: Well, [that is] Aristotle's argument. Or take the other example. If a woman were as courageous as a man, she would not be a good woman. I mean, there would be—I don't know how you would call it—she would be somebody irregular. And similarly, if a man were as retiring—which is part of the *sōphrosynē* in the Greek sense of the term—as retiring as women are supposed to be, then he would be inadequate as a man. That is clear.

Mr. Burnam: He picks the particular virtues where it is most plausible to say they are the same, at least on the—

LS: Well, Socrates would have other difficulties. Granted for one moment that this is the last word on the subject, how would Socrates go on here? You have moderation and you have justice. These are two virtues, and we want to have one virtue. So he would have to discover a core in moderation on the one hand and in justice on the other which makes each what it is. It is surely provisional. But the interesting point is, as I said before: [(a) Socrates's] silence about the slave, his virtue; and (b) that Socrates reminds Meno of moderation and justice, and Meno without any difficulty [says]: Of course, sure they are virtues.

Now in order to understand that properly, there is another Platonic dialogue in which these virtues also come up and Socrates praises them very highly, with great emphasis. That's the *Gorgias*. And the interlocutor is not Meno but Callicles. Now what does Callicles say about this Socratic reminder? Well, he says that is bunk. These are virtues for low-class people but they are not true virtues, they are conventional virtues. They are not the true virtues.[69] And Callicles is not a vicious character, although he is very famous as such. But he is not comparable—he didn't do anything badly, he has even a great concern with Socrates. So in other words, a man's virtuousness is not proven by the fact that he agrees at once to the proposition [that] one ought to live decently. That is obviously not a proof. So now let us see. Now we come to the next answer.

Mr. Reinken:

> [70]And what of a child or an old man? Can they ever hope to be good if they are immoderate and unjust? Surely not.

LS: No.

Mr. Reinken: Page 275, "Seeing then that it is the same virtue in all cases?"

LS: Yes, yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.]: try and tell me, if you can recollect, what Gorgias—and you in agreement with him—say it is.

LS: Now wait a moment. You see, Socrates rubs it in: You are a follower of Gorgias. Whereas the only question of interest would be of course what Meno thinks about[71] [this virtue].[72] It is important that Socrates rubs this in,[73] [if I may] I call [it] that. And now what does Meno answer?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Simply that it is the power of governing mankind—if you want some single description to cover all cases. (73c6-d1)

LS: Yes. So this is then the second answer of Meno to the question of what virtue is. And there are altogether three such answers; and therefore this is the central answer. And generally speaking, what is in the center in a Platonic dialogue is the most important.

That doesn't mean that it is the most important absolutely, but in the context. Now it is characteristic of Meno that this is his central answer to [the question]: virtue consists in the ability to rule over human beings. Now[74] what are the implications of this answer, if we discuss this now provisionally? Yes?

Student: Well, a tyrant, could this—

LS: Yes, easily, that is true. So in other words, it would agree with what we hear about the tyrannical aspirations of Meno. But what would it imply also? For example,[75] since the slave issue is so important, what about the slave?

Student: By definition he could never be virtuous.

LS: Or if he had that ability, then he would not be a slave properly; I mean, he would only be a slave in his social position but he would deserve to be a ruler, obviously. What about women and children?

Student: In the case of women, they should rule.

LS: Ya, but the question—according to the ordinary understanding prevailing at least at that time and even—

Mr. Reinken: They shouldn't be getting their name in the newspapers.

LS: No, I think ordinarily it was thought that women can't rule. And children surely can't rule. So we have another difficulty here.[76] [The definition] would be defective from this point of view: that it makes it impossible to speak of the virtue of human beings in general, but only of—virtue would be a preserve of a very small part of men. The word which he uses is quite characteristic. He says virtue is the ability to rule over human beings—human beings, *anthrōpoi*. [This term] (from which such a word as anthropology, for example, is derived) is used frequently in contradistinction to *anêr*, man, which [is] like the Spanish meaning of *hombre*—you know, a man to be looked up to, or a man of power, of wealth, of one or the other distinction. And a human being has quite frequently a very negative meaning. A slave may be called human being. I don't think there is an English parallel to that. There is a German one, in case there is anyone who is here who speaks German—well, [it is] not quite sufficient: *das Mensch*, neuter for an undesirable woman, where this negative meaning is visible. But in Greek it is much clearer, and so virtue would be the preserve of *hombres*. [77]Would this be a defective definition if it is applicable only to *hombres* and not to other human beings? Why not? But we speak of virtuous women, of virtuous slaves, of virtuous children—I mean, not necessarily virtuous but good slaves, good children, good women.

Mr. Reinken: There could be a hierarchy of classes.

LS: Sure. In other words, the *hombre* would be the man *par excellence*; and the others would be more or less defective human beings, and therefore their virtues could not be

expected to be [on the same level]. There would be no difficulty in that. But that is not the point in which Socrates proceeds. You wanted to say—

Student: It seemed to me—isn't the definition defective in that a bad man who is a tyrant in ruling over people would fit the definition, while our commonsense notion of virtue wouldn't include him. So a tyrant who is ruling over men would not by common sense be a virtuous man.

LS: Yes. That shows that the [answers and] definitions[78] which Meno gives show in which direction he is moving. But the funny thing about him is that when Socrates reminds him of justice and moderation he immediately says: Of course! I never denied that—and contrary to this decent, courageous Callicles, who says [that] they are not virtues. And so that [answer] characterizes[79] [Meno]. Now according to Klein's interpretation that has to do with his memory, with his remembering every opinion which he has heard;[80] and that is of course confirmed by quite a few things we have seen already but which does not explain why he selects this particular kind of opinion, you know, a mere rememberer would remember all opinions indiscriminately, and that is not the case of Meno. Yes?

Mr. Schaefer: I wonder if Socrates rubbing it into him by asking what he remembers now of what Gorgias said doesn't also signify some distinction between the first definition and the second definition, in that in the first case Meno is trying to say what he believes, and in the second case Socrates now says: Well, I give up on you, you can't say it yourself; now try to remember what Gorgias said about it. And that brings about the second definition.

LS: And you with him. You think there is a difference here.

Mr. Schaefer: Well, I can't see it in the nature of the definitions themselves. But simply in the fact that preceding the first definition Socrates said: Forget Gorgias, tell me what you think. And now he says tell me what Gorgias said and you'll agree with him.

LS: But I mean, if one may be so bold as to refer to a writer other than Plato, in this case Aristotle: when Aristotle speaks in the first book of the *Politics* about the question of virtue, he refers explicitly to the fact[81] that Gorgias gave this answer, substantially the answer which Meno gave. So that's a Gorgian answer.

Mr. Schaefer: The second one.

LS: The first one. The first one,[82] [as] Gorgias answered the question by enumerating the virtues. And Aristotle says that is wiser than [to speak] in [this] apparently simplistic way of the one virtue which Socrates talks about.[xxiv] And I think Socrates would be the first to agree with that.[83] But his simplicity is in the service of a profundity which we must . . . try to understand. That will take some time. Good. So now next time we will continue where we left off.

[xxiv] See *Politics* 1260a 24-28

[1] Deleted “memory… drop.”
[2] Deleted “…the purpose.”
[3] Deleted “I’m not sure what the….”
[4] Changed from “Now…But the best thing is always to be a good boy and to take the passages not as ironical, and take them first literally, and only until you are compelled.”
[5] Deleted “should it be …why.”
[6] Deleted “This is after all only.”
[7] Deleted “this…and the other.”
[8] Deleted “are.”
[9] Deleted “…they.”
[10] Deleted “Why does…we have not….”
[11] Deleted “In this sense, that.” Moved “he has.”
[12] Deleted “the…does.”
[13] Deleted “not….”
[14] Deleted “This is not….”
[15] Deleted “And therefore….”
[16] Deleted “Meno.”
[17] Deleted “it.”
[18] Changed from “. Now at this…Let us here… Klein makes points which are crucial for an interpretation and I think to some extent surely correct. At the bottom of page 43.”
[19] Deleted “the.”
[20] Deleted “the.”
[21] Changed from “What do you say is virtue?”
[22] Moved “by the Greeks.”
[23] Moved “Only.”
[24] Deleted “And we cannot always…we must ….”
[25] Deleted “means.”
[26] Deleted “you can make … yes.”
[27] Deleted “we can.”
[28] Deleted “he does not say….”
[29] Deleted “he.”
[30] Deleted “which we ordinarily….”
[31] Deleted “change in this…a.”
[32] Deleted “I mean that, that is”
[33] Changed from “Now we cannot…it is very difficult, hopelessly difficult, to explain this…whether the apostrophe is used in all cases.”
[34] Deleted “It means …these words.”
[35] Moved “do.”
[36] Deleted “when.”
[37] Deleted “and ….”
[38] Deleted “let us read.”
[39] Changed from “In other words …well, you remember what was said before about the power of the technical vocabulary stemming above all, primarily from Aristotle, of course prepared by Plato.”
[40] Deleted “be such…cannot.”
[41] Changed from Socrates, who before had already said, I must have good luck, I must have had a piece of good luck that I gave this erroneous answer, that there was no one in my opinion who knows what virtue is
[42] Deleted “to begin with say.”
[43] Deleted “with.”
[44] Deleted “what does he mean by…I mean.”
[45] Deleted “we cannot….”
[46] Deleted “it.”
[47] Deleted “Now and.”
[48] Deleted “and.”
[49] Deleted “these”

[50] Changed from "This would lead to the *Republic*, we would be driven into this whole argument, what is…what is virtue and is it sufficiently defined by that everyone does the job for which he is fitted by his age and by his social condition."
[51] Deleted "is…which."
[52] Deleted "and." Moved "only to some extent."
[53] Moved "can."
[54] Changed from "Surely this is not…if you know that opium has a power of making you sleep you cannot make opium, that goes without saying."
[55] Deleted "That is impossible, on this basis."
[56] Deleted "except."
[57] Deleted "this."
[58] Deleted "Now."
[59] Deleted "Is there not…is not." Moved "for example."
[60] Deleted "can be…."
[61] Deleted "about the…."
[62] Deleted "health is exchangeable…."
[63] Deleted "…the."
[64] Deleted "all human…."
[65] Deleted "if it is a necessary consequence that if no one can do his job well"
[66] Deleted "one must."
[67] Deleted "The virtuous opinions have to be…."
[68] Deleted "them."
[69] Deleted "So in other words…and."
[70] Deleted "Is it only in the case of virtue do you think, Meno, ….and so on with the rest."
Apologies, the page keeps slipping back."
[71] Deleted "it."
[72] Deleted "Socrates."
[73] Deleted "as."
[74] Deleted "there are." Moved "obvious."
[75] Deleted "what about…."
[76] Changed from "It is only…it would be a definition defective from this point of view, that it makes it impossible to speak of the virtue of human beings in general, but only of…virtue would be a preserve of a very small part of men."
[77] Deleted "Is this…Would."
[78] Deleted "which Meno…the." Moved "answers."
[79] Deleted "him."
[80] Deleted "But that is…."
[81] Deleted "that Meno…I'm sorry."
[82] Deleted "that."
[83] Deleted "If he did not…."

Session 4: no date

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —reading a dialogue, and as you surely know from the daily papers there is very much talk today about dialogues; for example, between the West and the East, between Jews and Christians, between Mayor Daley[i] and Dr. Martin Luther King, and so on. Now there is a connection between these dialogues and the Platonic dialogues, as [is] indicated by the very word dialogue, but there is also a difference, and we'll reflect perhaps for a moment about the difference[1] in order to bridge the gulf or to see more clearly the gulf between this kind of dialogue and the Platonic dialogue.

Now these dialogues of which people talk so frequently today are meant to be dialogues between equals, and they are meant to lead to peaceful adjustments, to mutual respect, and in the worst case to an agreement to disagree. These dialogues are not necessarily made in pursuit of the truth. Now in a Platonic dialogue the situation is slightly different. They are obviously made in pursuit of the truth, and above all there is always a clear leadership [on the part] of Socrates, i.e., inequality of the partners. One can wonder whether Socrates ever learns anything from his conversations with others. Of course he will learn something[2] about Meno or about the other interlocutors, but whether he learns something about virtue, for example, by conversing with Meno, that can very well be doubted. Socrates does not undergo any change, we can say, within the dialogue. There are no surprises [3][for] him—I mean, except about a particular trait or the character of the man, but not regarding the fundamental issues—whereas in the dialogue in the present-day sense, it is thought that one hears something from the other side regarding the general problems of which one hasn't thought before, and one is exposed for the first time to something of which we had never thought before. And from this point of view the Platonic dialogue might very well seem to be inferior because there is no change in the chief character. Now to use the extreme expression which was used by[4] the greatest modern opponent of Plato, namely, Nietzsche: Platonic dialogues are boring.[ii] Now[5] I believe they will appear so if one views them in the light of modern things.

Now of course there are certain presuppositions which are tacitly made in the modern kind of dialogues, namely, that the two partners are equally honest and equally thoughtful. Now whether that condition is in fact fulfilled, that is a very long question. The Socratic dialogue may be inferior to what is now meant by a dialogue, but we cannot know this[6] [so long as] we do not know the Socratic dialogue, and therefore we would have an additional reason for studying a Platonic dialogue. It would surely throw some light, positive or negative, on what is now understood by a dialogue.

But now this dialogue is devoted, as we know now, to the subject of virtue. It's an attempt to find out what virtue is, and at the same time it is an enactment of virtue and its opposite, vice—a presentation of virtue and vice through the presentation of Socrates on the one hand and Meno on the other. Now what kind of man is Meno? That is the question which we have raised from the beginning and which we must raise again,

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[i] Richard J. Daley served as mayor of Chicago from 1955 until his death in 1976.

[ii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "What I Owe to the Ancients," sec. 2, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, 557.

because we have not yet an answer.[7] Following Xenophon and Klein, we would say [that] he is an arch-villain. But what we know directly from the dialogue is that he is a follower of Gorgias. Now Gorgias can loosely be described as a sophist. He was a teacher of rhetoric. But the line between rhetoric and sophistry is difficult to draw. And the sophists are notorious as teachers of immorality. Whether this is a defensible view is a question. It is suggested in a general way by Plato, but partly on insufficient grounds, namely, the sophists are not gentlemen because they receive payment for teaching. Now then of course we poor professors clearly would be in a very difficult situation if this were the last word on that. [Laughter] In this situation, clearly this doesn't go to the root of the matter, but it is that view which Plato[8] sets forth most obviously. When the Platonic view and Platonism altogether was attacked with particular force in the early nineteenth century by the English historian and parliamentarian George Grote—this is still worth reading, what he says about this subject.[iii] Grote, with remarkable candor, says [that] if Plato's verdict on the sophists stands, then such most respectable beings like Members of Parliament would also not cut the best figure. And since this is excluded *a priori* [laughter], Plato is wrong. However this may be, however questionable the sophists may be, Gorgias, as we know him from Plato's dialogue *Gorgias* itself, was not a model of virtue but he was surely not an arch-villain, so that fact that Meno is a pupil of Gorgias would not sufficiently explain his arch-villainy.

But let us turn to the other point which came up last time. Meno is a follower of Gorgias. That means he is a man who remembers what Gorgias said. Now, as I said before, this would not make him an arch-villain. And above all it would not explain why he jumps at Socrates with his initial question. But as is shown by his first answer to the question of what virtue is, he has a rather low view of virtue. The virtue of a man consists in helping his friends and hurting his enemies. That is not a very high view of virtue. And there may be a connection between this view of virtue and his character. But Polemarchus, in the first book of the *Republic*, who is a friend of Socrates and a nice man[9] in the ordinary sense of the word, has a similar view. And he is surely not an arch-villain. Meno even admits without any hesitation that a man's virtue consists in administering well the affairs of the city. He said originally only in administering the affairs of the city, but when Socrates corrects this, he has no objections; he is perhaps not even aware of the importance of this correction. And also, when Socrates says [that] of course he must administer it with moderation and justice, he says: Of course! But without Socrates's reminding him of moderation and justice he would not have thought of them, and this does throw some slight light on his character. He remembers rather the low view than the high view, and this may indeed be connected with his vice, with his villainy.

Now this much to link up last time's discussion with today.[10] I would like now to turn to a particular point which was raised by Mr. Bruell in the last meeting regarding[11] 72d and e. We don't have to reread that; it was only when Socrates tried to illustrate the question by bringing up the examples of health, tallness—let me now translate it by "magnitude"—and strength. And magnitude was in the center, but Socrates says less about magnitude than about health and strength. This was the situation. Now Mr. Bruell

[iii] George Grote (1794-1871), English classicist and historian, author of *Plato and Other Companions of Socrates*, 4 vols. (1865), *History of Greece*, 12 vols., 1846-56).

drew our attention to the fact that magnitude had already been mentioned shortly before in[12] [72]b when Socrates spoke of bees and the difference among bees in regard to beauty and magnitude. Now we see, then (and that was the point I made already last time) that somehow Socrates replaces now beauty by health and strength. Beauty, *kalos*, has an ambiguity which it doesn't have in English. It means of course first what we ordinarily understand by beauty: handsomeness. But it means also nobility, the beauty of character, the beauty of actions. In some languages other than Greek you can speak of beautiful actions, but in English you can't and therefore one has to say this explicitly. So Socrates as it were pushes back beauty, nobility, in favor of health and strength.

Now Meno himself is beautiful, as will be stated shortly afterward, and his final definition of virtue, the third one, which we might read in 77b is "the poet says virtue is to enjoy the beautiful things and being able to [do them]." As Meno explains that, to desire the noble[13] [or] beautiful things and be able to get hold of them. But as Socrates makes clear immediately afterward, the beautiful things, the noble things, the fine things, are the good things; and in the sequel, the beautiful or noble or fine is completely forgotten and[14] he speaks only of the good[15], so that Socrates moves Meno without any difficulty from the beautiful or fine things toward the good things. And what does this mean? Which are higher in rank, the noble things or the good things? We can give a provisional answer on the basis of a well-known statement in the *Republic*: that the highest theme is the idea of the good, and that means not the idea of the noble or beautiful. So in other words, Socrates could move Meno from the lower, as it were, to the higher. But it could also mean something else, namely, insofar as the good things ordinarily mean the useful things—wealth, for example—and the noble things mean the things choiceworthy for their own sake, not with a view to utility. From this point of view, the noble things would be in ordinary parlance higher than the good things.

Now as for the term magnitude, *megathos*, which we translate by tallness or size, we[16] might mention in passing and in advance that Meno later proves to be a friend of the Persian king and the Persian king is called the great king, *megas basileus*. And therefore Socrates may wish[17] both to emphasize and to de-emphasize Meno's concern with greatness in this sense, meaning bigness of power. This much about this passage.[18] Mr. Bruell, is this sufficient for you? Good.

Now we turned at the end of the last meeting to the second answer of Meno in 73[c]6 to 9.[iv] Let us read what Klein says about it on page 54.[19] We have to read only the first two paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken:

> Socrates takes up that question where it was left a while ago (71d) and, under the assumption that one and the same excellence is present in all cases, challenges

[iv] Strictly speaking, Meno's answer can be found at 73c9-d1. The lines quoted contain Socrates's challenge.

> Meno: "Make an attempt[v] to tell, to recollect, what Gorgias says it is and you, too, following him[vi]."
> There are three points of emphasis in this challenge: first, the renewed stress on Meno's merely *repeating* Gorgias' words; secondly, the necessity, therefore, to *recall* Gorgias' utterances on the subject; thirdly, a certain *effort* required from Meno to satisfy Socrates' curiosity.[vii]

LS: So Socrates underlines the fact that Meno is a follower, a mere follower of Gorgias. Now Meno is in no way offended by this. Does he then know that he is inferior to Gorgias, and this doesn't cause any troubles for him? Is he, in other words, modest? The word *sōphrosynē*, which I ordinarily translate by "moderation," may also mean "modesty."[20] The simplest trans[la]tion[viii] would be moderation, temperance, [but considered] as a special virtue of women, modesty is more becoming in the case of women, generally speaking, than in the case of men according to a very general prejudice which I believe is still intelligible. So in other words, does he know that he is inferior to Gorgias and accept it in a decent spirit, or does he not admire very much the kind of wisdom which Gorgias possesses? Does he regard it as merely ministerial to virtue proper, to that which he, Meno, possesses perhaps in a higher degree than Gorgias? We do not know yet.

Socrates is not certain that Meno will succeed. You see, he says: "Try to tell and to recollect." He is sure that Meno will tell something, will say something; whether he will recollect is not so sure. Socrates[21] of course does not refer to the previous discussion. He does not say: You have answered the question of what virtue is, at least to some extent, by saying that virtue is moderation and justice. That is forgotten for the time being. It will come up very soon. But another thing which we have not reflected upon and which has taken place without our being sufficiently aware of it: you remember the beginning; Meno questions Socrates. Since 71d or thereabouts, Meno has become the questioned and Socrates has become the questioner.[22] This means, however, taking it on the lowest level: Who questions, the ruler or the ruled, the master or the slave? The ruler. So Meno's rulership is in a way replaced. He is now something like a ruled man. He is not yet sufficiently aware of it, but it is an important change. He is no longer[23] a man who says: You have to obey me; you have to answer my question. Now let us continue where we left off, [with] Meno's answer.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] "Simply that it is the power of governing mankind—if you want some single description to cover all cases." (73c9-d1)

LS: "If you want one thing, one thing covering all." Now you see Meno doesn't say[24] [in any way that] this is Gorgias's view of virtue. We have only Socrates's word for it, that Meno's answer is [Gorgias's][25] answer. We[26] get a notion of Gorgias's answer from the

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[v] Klein adds: "(*peirō*)"
[vi] Klein adds: "(*kai sy met' ekeinou*)"
[vii] Klein, 54.
[viii] Strauss must have meant "translation" in this context.

Gorgias,[27] 452d5 to 8. When he is asked: What is the power of rhetoric? he says: "What is Socrates in truth the greatest good—"

Mr. Reinken: "and the source not only of personal freedom for individuals—"

LS: "Personal" is not a word.[ix] Omit "personal."

Mr. Reinken: This is page 10 in the LLA, which we used. "of freedom for individuals, but also of mastery over others in one's own country."[x]

LS: Ya, "in one's city," of course.[28] So here rhetoric enables a man to acquire the highest good[29] —what the highest good is is not said—while at the same time it causes freedom for men and ruling in one's own city. There is no reference to freedom, of course, in Meno's notion of virtue.[30] Meno, although he had been reminded so forcefully by Socrates of justice and moderation, does of course not say that virtue is moderation and justice. That would occur to him only when reminded by Socrates. And now let us see what Socrates reminds him of.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] That is just what I am after. But is virtue the same in a child, Meno, and in a slave—an ability to govern each his master? And do you think he who governed would still be a slave?
> [MEN.] I should say certainly not, Socrates. (73d2-5)

LS: Yes. Now the first definition implied, you recall, that virtue is justice. The second and central definition does not imply it. It does not apply, as Socrates points out, to children and slaves. Socrates emphasizes the slaves, as you see by the fact that he mentioned child only once and slave two times[31]. Socrates forgets, we may say, the difference between a man who is able to rule and the actual ruler. For the true slave is not able to rule. A man who is able to rule may happen to be a slave, but he is in the wrong place because he has the capacity to rule. Meno's definition is justifiable in the following way. By virtue, we understand above all virtue *par excellence*, just as we understand by a horse a healthy, grown-up horse rather than a sickly colt or any other defective form. All other virtues are parts of the virtue *par excellence* or more or less defective forms of it. And to that extent it is justified. But therefore Meno could rightly say: If it fits only the born ruler, that is[32] all right because you can then by the necessary reflection find out what the lower forms would be. Now let us see the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> I should say certainly not, Socrates.
> [SOC.] No, indeed, it would be unlikely, my excellent friend.

LS: "[33]You best one," would be more literal. Yes?

[ix] That is, not an ancient Greek word.

[x] Mr. Reinken refers to the translation used in Strauss's course on the *Gorgias* (autumn 1963), published by the Library of Liberal Arts.

Mr. Reinken:

> And again, consider this further point: you say it is "to be able to govern"; shall we [not] add to that—"justly, not unjustly"?
> [MEN.] Yes, I think so; for justice, Socrates, is virtue.
> [SOC.] Virtue, Meno, or a virtue?
> [MEN.] What do you mean by that? (73d5-e2)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now let us see what Klein says on the subject on page 55. That refers rather to the succeeding passage. "If Meno's statement were true, then excellent children as well as excellent slaves would be able to rule, to rule over their parents or masters, and would a slave, however excellent, who rules, still be a slave?" Yes. We can drop that now. And let us go on. So let us return to this last question: Virtue or *a* virtue? How do you mean? Meno says. [Now] how does——

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] What I would in any other case. To take roundness, for instance; I should call it a figure, and not figure pure and simple. And I should name it so because there are other figures as well.
> [MEN.] You would be quite right—just as I say there are other virtues besides justice.
> [SOC.] What are they? Tell me. In the same way as I can tell you of other figures, if you request me, so do you tell me of other virtues.
> [MEN.] Well then, courage, I consider, is a virtue, and temperance, and wisdom, and loftiness of mind; and there are a great many others.
> [SOC.] Once more, Meno, we are in the same plight: again we have found a number of virtues when we were looking for one, though not in the same way as we did just now; but the one that runs through them all, this we are not able to find.
> [MEN.] No, for I am not yet able, Socrates, to follow your line of search, and find a single virtue common to all, as one can in other cases.
> [SOC.] And no wonder; but I will make an effort, so far as I can, to help us onward. (73e3-74b3)

LS: Now let us stop here first. Now Socrates[34] has two arguments, as you see, against the second answer. The second argument against the central definition is this. Even granting that one may identify virtue with the virtue *par excellence*, the virtue *par excellence* is incompletely defined by Meno. One must add "justly," for, as Meno says, justice is a virtue. Again, he has been reminded of justice by Socrates. He has forgotten justice.[35] Now regarding moral things that is a peculiar thing.[36] One cannot forget one's duty in the way in which one can forget whether one has an ashtray available. To forget one's duty is already a vice, an act of vice; and[37] Meno is quite capable of forgetting that, so Socrates reminds him of virtue, of justice. Socrates makes Meno better, in a way. Or does one not become better by being reminded of justice? Must not one practice justice, and only by this would one become better? You remember that practice was the central theme in Meno's initial question. Meno does not see that he has again failed to answer the question

as to the one which we mean whenever we speak of virtue. Now let us see here[38] [what] Klein [says] on page 55, third paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Socrates proceeds to clarify that distinction anew by choosing a new example, this time one which lends itself to a colloquial as well as to various "technical" interpretations. The example is *schēma*, "figure," used first of all in the colloquial sense of "closed surface of a visible thing," commonly identified with the "shape" of that thing. Visible things are shaped in innumerably different ways. Facing a more or less "roundly" curved object, we may call its shape, its surface, its *schēma*, "roundishness."[xi] Asked what "roundishness" is, Socrates goes on, he would say: a certain kind of shaped surface,[xii] not just shaped surface[xiii], for the good reason that there are other surfaces or shapes of things.

Meno is quick to take that up. You would be right in saying that, he hastens to remark, just as I too[xiv] am rightly saying that there is not only justice but there are other kinds of excellence, too. And Socrates, insisting: "What are they, tell me! Just as I too[xv] could name for you other surfaces as well, if you bid me to do that, *you too*[xvi] do the same for me other excellences."

There is some bantering in this exchange, centering about the words *kai egō* and *kai sy*.

LS: Meaning "you too" and "I too."

Mr. Reinken:

(We are reminded of Socrates' identifying himself ironically with his fellow citizens at the beginning of the dialogue[xvii] and of the phrase *kai sy* which Socrates has already used twice in speaking to Meno, in the ambiguously paratactical sentence[xviii] and in his recent challenge[xix].)

Meno obliges: "Well then, I think courage is excellence and [so is] soundness of mind and wisdom and loftiness and a great many other excellences."

That is what Socrates, clearly, expected to hear. Who would not, in answer to Socrates' challenge, give the same or a similar list of acknowledged virtues? And Socrates can point out that he and Meno, while looking for *one* excellence, have once more discovered many, though not in the same way as before. But the one which runs through them all, he says, they are unable to find.

Meno admits readily that, while with regard to all the examples given by Socrates he could meet the latter's demand, he is still unable to get hold of the one

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[xi] Klein adds: (*strongylotēs*, 73e 3f., 74 5-7).
[xii] Klein adds "(*schēma ti).*"
[xiii] Klein adds "(*ouch houtōs haplōs hoti schēma*)."
[xiv] Klein italicizes 'too,' and then adds the Greek: (*kai egō*).
[xv] Too is italicized, followed once more by (*kai egō*).
[xvi] Klein: (*kai sy*).
[xvii] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (71b1).
[xviii] Klein: (71c10).
[xix] Klein: (73c 7f.).

> excellence that applies to all cases of excellence in the way Socrates is looking for it. Socrates, on his part, says (rather darkly): "No wonder."[xx] And he pledges to do all he can to bring Meno and himself closer to the matter. In the meantime, however, we observe that Meno's first attempt to come to grips with human excellence in its "generality" has failed.[xxi]

LS: Yes. Now let us consider for one moment the five virtues which Meno mentions when asked by Socrates to mention other virtues. These are the virtues which he spontaneously remembers without being reminded of them, as he was of justice, by Socrates. These virtues are, as you see, courage or manliness, moderation, wisdom, loftiness, and so on. Now justice he had not remembered, and justice, however, is in a way the most obvious virtue. I quote to you a passage from Cicero's *Offices*, paragraph 20, where he says "[39]In justice the splendor of virtue is greatest. And it is that [justice—LS] with a view to which men are called good." So when we speak of a good man, generally we are understood to mean a just man. Yes?

Student: By loftiness, does he mean proud bearing? Could you give[40] a more exact definition of the word, please?

LS: Ya, to do what becomes greatness, becomes a great man. What becomes greatness. I do not know what would be the simplest English translation.

Same Student: It appears to have a negative connotation, almost—overbearing.

LS: No, no. Plato uses it in his own list of virtues in the *Republic* when [he gives] the qualities which a philosopher must have. I mean, [it is] the opposite of pettiness. What would that be?

Several Students: Magnanimity?

LS: No, not magnanimity; it's interesting [that] it's not magnanimity. [Meno does not say] *megalopsycheia*, [but rather] *megaloprepeia*. Pardon?

Student: Magnitude?

LS: I do not know. I mean, nothing occurs to me at the moment but it has—

Mr. Reinken: Greatness is taking that on.

Mr. Butterworth: What's the virtue that Aristotle contrasts with magnanimity in the *Ethics*?

LS: No, no.[41] That is *mikropsycheia* or something of this kind, but not *megaloprepeia,*[42] [which] does not occur as a special virtue in Aristotle's *Ethics*.

[xx] Klein: (*eikotōs ge*).
[xxi] Klein, 55-56.

Student: I don't know whether it's exactly fair to accuse Meno at this particular point of forgetting justice, because Socrates's question is: "So can you tell me of other virtues?" just after—

LS: Ya, that is true. But here he remembers even moderation now, which is quite remarkable. It is a slight improvement. One can say that. Piety is not mentioned; that we see. Good.[43] Now let us go on from here until we reach a pause where we can reflect.[44] You may begin with the speech of Socrates [at 74b3].

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And no wonder; but I will make an effort, so far as I can, to help us onward.

LS: [45]Well, the point where we are is this: Socrates gives now Meno another example of how to answer such questions. In the case of virtue, Meno was unable to say what virtue as such is, and he was only able to indicate this or that virtue—maybe all virtues—but not what virtue as such is. And now[46] [Socrates] takes the example of figures—a round figure—and he may enumerate all kinds of figures; this would still not be an answer to the question of what figure is. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> You understand, of course, that this principle of mine applies to everything—

LS: "Principle" is of course not there.

Mr. Reinken:

> if someone asked you the question I put to you just now: What is figure, Meno? and you replied: Roundness; and then he said, as I did: Is roundness figure or a figure? I suppose you would answer: A figure.
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] And for this reason—that there are other figures as well?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And if he went on to ask you of what sort they were, you would tell him?
> [MEN.] I would. (74b3-c4)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So Socrates treats Meno like a rather slow-witted man, going step by step. He makes Meno merely repeat the thought stated in the preceding passage. But the questioner in the dialogue within the dialogue is now no longer Socrates but someone: if "someone" were to ask you. Perhaps Socrates was [somehow] a[47] hindrance to Meno's understanding, and Socrates effaces himself and substitutes X for himself. Now there will be another illustration in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And if he asked likewise what color is, and on your answering "white" your questioner then rejoined: Is "white" color or a color? your reply would be: A color; because there are other colors besides.
> [MEN.] It would.
> [SOC.] And if he bade you mention other colors, you would tell him of others that are colors just as much as white?
> [MEN.] Yes.

LS: Now let us stop here. So this is another illustration of the same thing, and the only question would be this: Why does Socrates pick these particular examples [of] figure and color? But he would have to use some example. Now the point is now perfectly clear to Meno. He has to give an answer regarding virtue which would fit all virtues, just as a possible answer regarding figure would fit all figures, and regarding color all colors. Yes. Now the next point.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Now suppose that, like me, he pursued the argument and said: We are always arriving at a variety of things—

LS: I believe you omitted something—in the first speech of Socrates. Oh, I'm sorry, no, I'm sorry. Yes? Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> We are always arriving at a variety of things, but let me have no more of that: since you call these many things by one single name, and say they are figures, every one of them, even when they are opposed to one another, tell me what is that which comprises round and straight alike, and which you call figure—including straight equally with round under that term. For that is your statement, is it not?
> [MEN.] It is.
> [SOC.] And in making it, do you mean to say that round is no more round than straight, or straight no more straight than round?
> [MEN.] No, to be sure, Socrates.

LS: In other words, they are different.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] What you mean is that the round shape is no more a figure than the straight, or the straight than the round.
> [MEN.] Quite right. (74c5-e10)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Now let us see first what Klein says at the top of page 58.

Mr. Reinken: Where is it?

LS: Only what he says in parenthesis.

Mr. Reinken:

> (We should note that the opposition between "straight" and "curved" is not quite the same as that between *aretê* and *kakia*,[xxii] or strength and weakness, but perhaps comparable to that between "bee" and "drone.")

LS: Ya, one could of course think also of something else. Just as there are opposites among the figures and the colors, say, black and white, there might be opposites among the virtues. That cannot be excluded. Now, that this is not entirely far-fetched you would see from Plato's *Statesman* 306, where manliness and moderation are presented as opposites, of course on a somewhat lower[48] level of the argument. But more relevant here, perhaps: Are perhaps the virtues of masters and slaves opposites? That might be a thought very much in Meno's mind. Regarding the name, you will have noticed that, that Socrates stresses here the word "name." In this passage, we are induced to wonder whether there is a connection between the essence (to use the traditional translation) between what makes a thing a thing of this kind and the name. And the name is here the name, obviously, of a kind of thing, like this or that color, this or that shape, i.e., this or that kind of color, this or that kind of shape, or this or that kind of virtue. But this will come up later more clearly. Now let us read [on from] where we have [stopped, at] the end of [page] 74.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then what can this thing be, which bears the name of figure? Try and tell me. Suppose that, on being asked this question by someone, either about figure or about colour, you had replied: Why, I don't so much understand what you want, sir, or even know—

LS: "Sir" is a wrong translation; it's "*ô anthrōpe*"—

Mr. Reinken: Fellow.

LS: Fellow. Mac, you could almost say. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: For the eighteenth century, "fellow" is very exact.

> [SOC.] or even know what you are saying—

LS: Don't repeat that. Those things can be said once [laughter].

Mr. Reinken:

> he might well have shown surprise, and said: Do you not understand that I am looking for that which is the same common element in all these things? Or would you still be unable to reply, Meno, if you were approached on other terms, and were asked: What is—

[xxii] virtue and badness

LS: "If someone were to ask you."

Mr. Reinken: if someone were to ask you the terms. Someone asked:

> [SOC] What is it that is common to the round and the straight and everything else that you call figures—the same in all? Try and tell me; it will be good practice for your answer about virtue.
> [MEN.] No, it is you who must answer, Socrates. (74e11-75b1)

LS: Now let us stop here. You see, it is still a fictitious dialogue, but Socrates presents Meno now as angry with the fictitious interlocutor, with that X, and as treating him with contempt ("fellow") as if this interlocutor were a slave. In the actual dialogue between Socrates and Meno, Meno gives a command to Socrates, as you have seen: No, you answer. A master does not have to answer questions; he raises questions. Now could this explain the abrupt beginning of the dialogue? Meno is sure of his superiority[49] to Socrates, and he is sure of possessing virtue. Very well. Yet why then does he approach Socrates? We have not[50] made any progress in this respect. Now let us read in Klein's commentary[51] the third paragraph, Meno's reaction.

Mr. Reinken:

> Meno's reaction to all this elaborate and insistent urging is indeed surprising. He bluntly, and rudely, refuses to go through the proposed exercise. "No! You, Socrates, give the answer," is his reply. This refusal is the more surprising since Meno *did* make an attempt to "define" what excellence was. Now he wants to be *told* what *schēma* is.[xxiii]

LS: [What] "figure is."[52] Yes. So[53] how do we explain the fact that Meno had made an attempt to answer what virtue is, but does not make an attempt to answer what figure is? What would be the most obvious explanation? Yes?

Student: He is getting scared and doesn't want to be trapped into anything by Socrates again.

LS: No; he hasn't given any answer regarding figure, whereas he has given two answers regarding virtue. Well, the simplest explanation, I believe, would be that he has given some thought to virtue and was not particularly concerned with figure. This would be intelligible. So this would induce us to raise the question: Could Meno by any chance be concerned with virtue? We cannot exclude that. And could this[54] strange concern with virtue, deeper than all his frivolity, [be the reason] which induced him to approach Socrates with his initial question? Now let us go on. By the way, if you have any questions or difficulties, please interrupt me. It sometimes happens that one forgets one's questions. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] You wish me to do you the favour?
> [MEN.] By all means.

[xxiii] Klein, 58.

> [SOC.] And then you will agree to take your turn and answer me on virtue?
> [MEN.] I will.
> [SOC.] Well then, I must make the effort, for it is worth our while.
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Come now— (75b2-7)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Now Socrates brings up the question, What is a figure?, as a kind of exercise or training for Meno so that Meno can later say what is virtue. Meno is unable or unwilling to undergo the training, but he is curious to hear the answer to the question of what figure is. Socrates will do Meno a favor provided that Meno will do him a favor, so he establishes equality between himself and Meno, equal exchange of favors. And he thus tests Meno's justice.[55] One of the most simple meanings of justice is that you keep your promises. You get something and you promise to do something in return; let's see whether you do it. We will see—I don't let any cat out of the bag if I say [that] Meno will not keep his promise. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question with regard to your interpretation of why Meno refuses to answer this question about figure. According to Klein—and also it seems to follow the text quite well—Meno jumps on Socrates's later geometrical proofs as though he were cognizant of these things. Then shouldn't he—

LS: Ya, but that does not mean that he has given it any thought. It does not even mean that he remembers a definition, a geometrical definition of figure, which he has heard.[56] Let us wait until we have the evidence together. Let us read a few more lines.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] let us[xxiv] try and tell you what figure is. Just consider if you accept this description of it: figure, let us say, is the only existing thing that is found always following colour. Are you satisfied, or are you looking for something different? I am sure I should be content with a similar account of virtue from you.
> [MEN.] But it is such a silly one—

LS: Ya. Let us—all right. Yes, read this.

Mr. Reinken: "But it is such a silly one, Socrates." (75b8-c2)

LS: Ya. Now Meno is dissatisfied with Socrates's answer. There can be no doubt about that. "We shall try," Socrates says. Who are the "we"? We Athenians? Probably. So at any rate, Socrates does not present his answer as peculiar to himself. He suggests that it could also be Meno's answer. Now the definition of figure [is that it] is the only thing which always follows color. No figure without color, and no color without figure. But the emphasis is on the primacy of color. Figure follows color. Now here we must turn to Klein's comment, which is here particularly relevant, on page 59, the fifth paragraph. "Whatever Meno's."

[xxiv] In original: "let me"

Mr. Reinken:

> Whatever Meno's response, we have to consider Socrates' statement most attentively.
>
> 1. Its meaning is clear: wherever and whenever we see color, either some patch or patches of it, or widely spread, whether uniformly or in distinctly diversified patterns or in ever changing nuances, we actually see *colored surfaces*; and, conversely, we become aware of surfaces of whatever shape only by seeing color. The phenomenon of "color" and the phenomenon of "surface" are *co-extensive*, and we mean both, when, in ordinary discourse, we speak of surfaces of things. Socrates' statement describes in words something we all can see, and does it with precision
>
> 2. Socrates' query whether the way he "defines" figure[xxv] suffices Meno leaves the possibility open that there might be another way or other ways of "defining" it.[xxvi] The "definition" offered by Socrates is, at all events, commensurate in its precision only with the colloquial meaning of figure. It can stand, with regard to its universality, the test of "conversion," for it is also true that color always accompanies figure. But figure and color[xxvii] are not "identified" in Socrates' statement.

LS: In quotes: "identified."

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> Its universality consists in the fact that "figure" and "color"[xxviii] are under all circumstances mutually complementary: one cannot be without the other. And it should perhaps be noted that our familiarity with both of them does not seem quite evenly balanced: are we not more familiar with "colors" than with "surfaces"? Moreover, color has only "figure" as a necessary "companion," while figure seems to need "body" as another necessary complement.[xxix]

LS: Now we cannot read the whole point, but I hope you will read it. Now what Klein suggests can be stated as follows: that Socrates chooses the examples of color and figure, or figure and color, with a view to the question of virtue. The famous[57] Socratic assertion that virtue is knowledge, which creates such great difficulties, might have to be[58] understood in the light of this distinction here and necessary connection between figure and color, so that we would have this formula. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Color, figure, body [parallel] to virtue, to knowledge, to soul. This would surely imply that virtue is not simply identical with knowledge, but that you never find virtue without

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[xxv] Klein gives the Greek *schēma* rather than the corresponding English word "figure." The same applies to the subsequent three appearances of the word "figure" in this quotation.

[xxvi] Klein inserts, four Greek adverbs, all of which are found in Socrates' statement: (*hikanōs-allōs-pōs-houtōs*).

[xxvii] Klein employs instead the Greek *chrōma*. The Greek words will be used consistently throughout the rest of this quotation, and will be read consistently as "figure" and "color" by Mr. Reinken.

[xxviii] Klein again gives the Greek: *schēma* and *chrōma*.

[xxix] Klein, 59-60.

finding knowledge, and you never find knowledge without finding virtue. This[59] is [a] suggestion we must surely take very seriously.

The key point, to repeat, is that the simple equation of virtue and knowledge does not have to mean that they are simply identical, simply exchangeable. They are exchangeable in a way, because when you see the one you see the other; therefore you can infer from the presence of the one the presence of the other.[60] But Meno, as we have seen, is very dissatisfied with this answer.[61] I will indicate the heart of the argument as it comes out in the sequel up to 76e. There are two kinds of answers to the "what is" question: the geometric answers—what we would now call the scientific answers—and the, let us say,[62] Socratic answers.[63] And whereas the scientific, technical answers have very great advantages, [64]in the decisive respect [they] are inadequate, whereas the Socratic answer is meant to be adequate. Now let us read the[65] sequel: "But this is silly, Socrates."

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] How do you mean?
> [MEN.] Well, figure, as I understand by your account, is what always follows colour. Very good; but if some said he did not know colour, and was in the same difficulty about it as about figure, what answer do you suppose would have come from you?
> [SOC.] The truth, from me— (75c3-8)

LS: This man would say the truth, ya. Now Meno's objection is surely unfair. If you have to define every term which you use, there will be an infinite regress. That[66] [would be as] if Socrates had objected to Meno's second answer by saying "You say virtue is ruling over human beings. [But] what [then] is a human being? If you do not give me [an] answer [to] that question first, I will not understand you."

Mr. Reinken: I think you're being unfair to Meno.

LS: Why?

Mr. Reinken:[67] Because the [example of demanding the definition of the] human being is [extending the sequence of definition to] another term, but human beings would not necessarily be defined with respect to virtue, in the figure-color thing, you have an immediate back—

LS: That is true.

Mr. Reinken: —an immediate back-to-back, and he's told you—

LS: Ya. But still, what is behind it? What is behind it is this: there must be[68] no reference to an unknown. Here you say [that] figure follows color, but you leave unanswered what color is.[69] Is this not the gist of his objection? What it leads to, if you would take Meno's objection seriously, is the notion—which is alien to Greek thought but which was developed in modern times—of an absolutely presuppositionless science, science which

does not presuppose anything, science which literally takes nothing for granted. And in a way, this was already haunting some Greeks but it is more visible in modern times. You would have to start from definitions, and nothing preceding the definitions must enter the argument. Is it not [so]? You begin with this definition and everything else is disregarded. And the whole reasoning takes place on the basis of the explicit definition. And according to the view which prevails today the[70] basic definitions must be consistent with each other, but[71] they don't have to be measured by a standard outside, [as such an external standard must be inadequate.][72] Good. Now here let us read two paragraphs in Klein's book on page 61, the fourth paragraph, "In what sense."

Mr. Reinken:

> In what sense can anyone not "know" color? We are all familiar with colors and color, except those of us who are blind or color-blind. But it does not seem that Meno has that exception in mind. So far as he is concerned, he has already indicated that he is acquainted with colors and he will have another opportunity, in the discussion which follows, to show that color cannot be "unknown" to him. Could the hypothetical personage Meno appeals to be totally unacquainted with colors? That does not seem likely either.[xxx]

LS: Now let us turn to the next page, second paragraph, 4.

Mr. Reinken:

> We might conjecture that Meno, in raising his objection, is relying on his remembrance of a well-known *technē* which prides itself on never using "unknown" terms, a *technē*, that is, which begins with something agreed upon as true[xxxi] and reaches, through agreed consequences, an indubitable result. It seems, in other words, that Meno remembers at this point the procedure of "synthetic" mathematics (Geometry), of which the *Elements* of Euclid are a late example, and which serves—not only for Aristotle—as the model for any apodeictic discipline. (May he not have been trained in this kind of mathematics in Gorgias' school?) This conjecture is borne out by the fact that Socrates, in his reaction to Meno's objection, refers almost immediately to that geometrical *technē* and meets, in so doing, with Meno's understanding. It would follow that Meno's objection entails a special "technical" re-interpretation of the meaning of figure.[xxxii]

LS: Now[73] the argument is working up [to this], to the clear opposition between geometrical, technical, scientific answers to questions "what is?" and philosophic answers. And let us see how this comes out. We will soon have reached the point. We are now in 75c8.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> what answer do you suppose would have come from you?

[xxx] Klein, 61.
[xxxi] Klein adds "(*alēthes ti homologoumenon*)."
[xxxii] In original: "*schema*" (not "figure"). Klein, 62.

> [SOC.] The truth from me; and if my questioner were a professor of the eristic and contentious sort, I should say to him: I have made my statement; if it is wrong, your business is to examine and refute it. But if, like you and me on this occasion, we were friends and chose to have a discussion together, I should have to reply in some milder tone more suited to dialectic. The more dialectical way, I suppose, is not merely to answer what is true, but also to make use of those points which the questioned person acknowledges he knows. (75c8-d7)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Now here Socrates makes a distinction which is quite common, between the eristic and the dialectic. Eristic comes from the Greek word for fighting, struggling, concerned with victory; and dialectic from *dialegesthai*, conversing. The eristic man says: Refute me if you can. He has a fundamentally hostile posture: no common ground. He avails himself of the right of the first occupier: I have said it—a kind of pride of possession. He has only to defend his position, not to establish it. He has no willingness to question his own premises or, as we would say, to be honest with himself. The dialectician, the conversationalist, starts from the common ground, from things granted by both to be known to them in order to establish something which to begin with is not granted by both sides. We have to [74][consider] another passage in Klein's book to understanding that—on page 63, second and third paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken: "The attenuating—"

LS: No—

Mr. Reinken:

> Having reasserted his stand in the matter of figure[xxxiii] and claimed that he had stated the truth about it, Socrates declares that he refuses to consider Meno as one of those "wise men" who are but "eristically" and "agonistically" disposed and consequently refuses to throw at him the challenge: just refute me. If people, he goes on, desire to discourse with one another as friends, which he and Meno are at the present moment[xxxiv] doing[xxxv], answers should be given in a gentler vein, more appropriate to such friendly discoursing[xxxvi]. And the more appropriate way of conversing with each other consists, one ought perhaps to assume,[xxxvii] in giving not only answers which tell the truth but in giving them *also* in terms which the interlocutor would concede[xxxviii] that he knows. "Accordingly, I too[xxxix] shall make an attempt[xl] to speak to you in this vein."

[xxxiii] Klein uses only the Greek word, *schēma*.
[xxxiv] Klein adds the Greek: *nyni*.
[xxxv] Mr. Reinken inserts this word, which does not appear in Klein.
[xxxvi] Mr. Reinken has misread yet again: Klein's text reads "conversing" [*dialektikōteron*]. Perhaps he is working off a slightly different edition.
[xxxvii] Klein inserts *isōs*.
[xxxviii] Klein gives the Greek: (*prosomologēi*).
[xxxix] Klein gives the Greek: (*kai egō*).
[xl] Klein gives the Greek: (*peirasomai).*

> The attenuating little word *isōs*—[xli]

LS: "Perhaps."

Mr. Reinken:

> perhaps—seems to indicate that Socrates is enunciating a *rule* which should govern any friendly and, therefore, *serious* conversation, but that he is also warning against possible misunderstandings of the very meaning of that rule. The rule demands "agreement" about terms. But the term "agreement"[xlii] itself is susceptible of different interpretations. It may be the kind of agreement on which Socrates bases his arguments whenever he appeals to the habitually accepted and familiar. There is also the need for agreement on terms in any "technical" discourse: "agreement"[xliii] governs the method of synthetic mathematics as well as any other apodeictic discipline. That is the kind of "agreement" Meno seems to have in mind in raising his objection in the first place. But is it the same that Socrates is apparently eager to achieve? Whatever the possible misunderstandings of the term "agreement," however, in subjecting himself to the rule he enunciates, Socrates should be in a position to meet Meno's criticism.[xliv]

LS: Yes.[75] In other words, there is a deceptive similarity between the kind of agreement on which any [76]geometric argument, demonstration, is based, and the kind of agreement which Socrates in his conversations presupposes. And everything depends on our understanding the difference between these two kinds of agreements. You wanted to say something?

Student: Could you possibly explain for us why, if Meno is an arch-villain, Socrates adopts the form of dialectic and treats him as a friend?

LS: Well, he tries. He tries. I mean, what should he—that would mean that Socrates accepted the view that justice consists in helping friends and hurting enemies. This is a rather low view of justice. The utmost of what Socrates might grant is that justice consists in helping friends and in abstaining from harming enemies, and if you please, on a very utilitarian ground as Socrates himself presented. If you have a vicious dog, what is the right manner of handling him: to be vicious to the dog or not rather to try to appease it? Now the same would also be the proper handling of Meno.[77] Surely they are not friends, but without the assumption of friendship, and without behaving like a friend, Socrates would not have a ghost of a chance to make any dent on Meno.

Same Student: Well, could the second be Socrates's attempt to convert Meno to virtue, then?

[xli] Klein, 63.
[xlii] Klein gives the Greek: (*homologia)*.
[xliii] Klein gives only the Greek *homologia*, here and in the following two places where Mr. Reinken reads "agreement."
[xliv] Klein, 63.

LS: Ya, that is hard to say. I mean, how much Socrates knows by now of Meno,[78] [whether] he has abandoned every attempt to make any dent on him or whether he has the conversation with Meno for the benefit of some onlookers, ultimately people like ourselves, we cannot yet say. But Socrates surely is not rude under any circumstances. If Meno addresses him he must reply, he must have a conversation with him. In other words, some dialogues are compulsory or, as we could say, they are a matter of duty and only of duty, whereas other dialogues are gratifying in themselves so that one doesn't have to regard them as a matter of duty. It would even be misleading to regard them so. Yes?

Student: Should this statement of treating him as a friend be taken in the context of the maneuvering for position which has been going on through the dialogue? First Meno appears in the role of questioner, then Socrates takes this role. Meno tries to force himself back into it, and eventually they arrive at this position more or less of equality, with this bargain which Socrates strikes: I'll answer your question if you'll answer mine.

LS: Ya,[79] in one sense it is correct. There is the bargain, an equality. But is not Socrates by now in control, the leader? I mean, in other words, that is a very simple irony regarding questioning. And you can say the man who raises a question, addresses a question to someone else admits to be the ignorant man, and he asks the knower. Ya? So therefore Socrates is ignorant and asks Meno, who knows, who claims to know what virtue is, that's quite true; but in fact, that is the simple irony. We see that Socrates knows better than Meno; his questioning is exactly the irony. So he is in control, in spite of all statements which seem to suggest that Meno is the ruler.

Same Student: Isn't this perhaps why there is some irony in the statement that they are acting in a dialectic fashion,[80] more or less [as] equals? Isn't this somewhat ironic in this context?

LS: Ya, but in one sense it is not. Socrates surely doesn't wish to win a victory over Meno and let him feel it, so to speak. Socrates is compelled to be superior because he is superior. There is no desire for victory involved. Is that clear? And there is a certain ambiguity, that is quite true. But the ambiguity with which we are more immediately concerned is the fundamental ambiguity starting from what is granted by both as known; this means something different in the arts, in science, in geometry, and it means something different in conversation, in dialectics. We have already some inkling [about] what Socrates has said, figure is that which follows color. The question of what is color does not arise in a philosophic discussion which starts from the fact that we have to take many things for granted, and there is no difficulty in that, because how can you possibly reflect without taking them for granted? Whereas in the sciences there is something like this notion that you can start from some definitions which are perfectly unambiguous and so on and so on, and can forget—must forget—about everything from which these definitions were originally derived. That will become clearer while we go on in the next few pages. Now shall we go on at this point? 75[d]:

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And this is the way in which I shall now try to argue with you. Tell me, is there something you call an end? Such a thing, I mean, as a limit, or extremity—I use all these terms in the same sense, though I daresay Prodicus might quarrel with us. But you, I am sure, refer to a thing as terminated or ended: something of that sort is what I mean—nothing complicated. (75d7-e5)

LS: "Nothing multicolored," more literally translated. Now Prodicus was a famous distinguisher of terms, and he is that sophist to whom Socrates was closest.[81] Good. But that is characteristic here for Socrates as he says: We don't want to have be very exact. It's not necessary to be very exact; we take this in the ordinary and loose sense in which we use the terms. We do not make these distinctions. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Yes, I do, and I think I grasp your meaning.
> [SOC.] Well, then, you speak of a surface, and also of a solid—the terms employed in geometrical problems?
> [MEN.] I do.
> [SOC.] So now you are able to comprehend from all this what I mean by figure. In every instance of figure I call that figure in which the solid ends; and I may put that more succinctly by saying that figure is "limit of solid."
> [MEN.] And what do you say of color, Socrates? (75e6-76a8)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. So Socrates has now given an answer, satisfied Meno's request to have an unambiguous definition of a figure. He does not even thank Socrates for it, and asks only an additional question. Good. We come to that later.

In Klein's comment, which is too long now to read, he makes this point: that this is the geometric definition of figure, a technical definition in contradistinction to Socrates's definition, which is colloquial, meaning based on the ordinary understanding of figure in pregeometric, ordinary thought. So this distinction between colloquial and technical corresponds to the distinction between commonsensical and scientific as we use it today. Science is not simply superior to common sense. This is connected with the fact that science emerges out of commonsense understanding through a specific transformation of commonsense understanding, through a specific abstraction. It presupposes the commonsense understanding and that specific transformation, but it does not reflect on this. It does not reflect on its own matrix. It presents itself, so to speak, as presuppositionless, as self-contained. The technical definition is not dialectical, but it has a superficial resemblance[82] [to] the dialectical definition because *technē*, art, science proceeds through things granted to be known—but they are not truly known. They are treated *as if* they were known. Dialectics is concerned with truly knowing.

Now why does this issue come up in the *Meno*, more than [in] the other dialogues? Meno, we remember, is an arch-villain who, for some reason which we do not know, is concerned with how virtue is acquired. He has also some familiarity, obviously, with geometry—with science, [as] we would say. Is there a connection between arch-villainy and mathematics? God forbid. [Laughter] But Meno has a third characteristic which links

his villainy and mathematics: he is a follower of Gorgias. He repeats what Gorgias says. He follows a tradition. And now let us read a point which Klein makes on page 66 at the top. Well, let me read it because there are only a few passages.

> The familiarity with that geometrical term (and other "technical" terms of the same kind) is not based on any kind of direct perception, let alone of "knowledge," but simply on the habit of using such terms without real understanding[xlv] . . . But the terms which denote . . . [these mathematical things—LS] and out of which their definitions are constructed neither indicate what they are nor reveal their peculiar mode of being. A *technē* of a very different kind [namely, dialectics—LS] seems required to accomplish that.[xlvi]

So the key point was the habit. Meno follows the tradition. There is a strange kinship between following a tradition and practicing the severest of the sciences. Both take for granted things which must not be taken for granted. Yet what has this to do with villainy? The answer to that question you would find—some answer, at any rate—in a passage at the end of the *Republic*, 619b to c. Will you read this from here on?

Mr. Reinken: "When the prophet had thus spoken, he said that the drawer of the first lot at once sprang to seize the greatest tyranny and that in his folly and greed he chose it without sufficient examination."

LS: The situation is this, that after death, after some disembodied life, [the souls are given] a choice of a new life. And this man chooses tyranny. What kind of man is he?

Mr. Reinken: A man who—

LS: No, read it.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> [H]e chose it without sufficient examination, and failed to observe that it involved the fate of eating his own children, and other horrors, and that when he inspected it at leisure he beat his breast and bewailed his choice, not abiding by the forewarning of the prophet. For he did not blame himself for his woes, but fortune and the gods and anything except himself. He was one of those who had come down from heaven, a man who had lived in a well-ordered polity in his former existence, participating in virtue by habit and not by philosophy.[xlvii]

LS: Now let us stop here. So in other words, participating in virtue by habit, by habituation and not by philosophy means that he will behave decently as long as he lives among human beings and is more or less supervised. But in his heart of hearts he is not

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[xlv] Strauss skips over large portions of text in reading Klein. The entire quotation can still be found on page 66.
[xlvi] Klein, 66.
[xlvii] *Republic* 619b-d. Mr. Reinken reads from the Loeb Classical Library translation by Paul Shorey.

convinced of the goodness of justice. He will choose a tyranny. Habituation is not conversion, and according to the Platonic teaching in the *Republic*, only a conversion can make a man truly just.

Now if this is so, then the man who lives, takes his bearings by habits and habituations alone is fundamentally a bad man. And that would be the link between Meno's habit-following, tradition-following and the strange similarity that has with geometry, and his being the arch-villain. Now this is of course not quite sufficient, because[83] this man described at the end of the *Republic* became so vicious only in the complete isolation after death when he chooses the next life, whereas Meno became vicious while living among human beings; and therefore this explanation [84]gives us a necessary reason for his villainy but not the sufficient reason, and we will have to see what the sufficient reason is. Yes? Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: I want to ask, I guess before we go on further: to me, somehow the second definition doesn't appear to be any less commonsensical, although it may be more geometrical than the first one. In other words, just as if I were going to ask somebody to define figure, the second definition would seem to accord pretty well with common sense in the first place.

LS: Which do you mean?

Mr. Schaefer: The definition of figure as the limit of solid.

LS: But that seems to be the definition occurring in the Greek mathematical literature, as I learned from Klein.

Mr. Schaefer: Yeah, but is it not at the same time—I thought the implication of the argument was that it was not only geometrical but also less commonsensical than the first one, which—

LS: Yes,[85] then I see. I misunderstood. Ya, sure, the first one corresponds to the primary understanding which does not mean that everyone could have hit on it. But it appeals, it refers only to things known commonsensically. That is the first one. And the second one has the peculiar virtues and vices of mathematical definitions, scientific definitions.

Mr. Schaefer:[86] It seems to me that if a person didn't know anything about geometry and if somebody said to him that figure was the limit of solid, that seems to me to be equally commonsensical, with the first one according to which figure was going to follow—

LS: Ya, but we have to wait, because later on Socrates will say explicitly—you can read that in 76d, after Socrates has also given [an] answer as to what color is, [stating] the scientific definition, and Meno likes these scientific answers much more than the conversational answers. And Socrates says in 76e: Yes, you like it, Meno, because the answer is tragic; hence it pleases you better than the one I had given in the first place, my first answer regarding figure. Tragic means high-fallutin', something like that. The mode

[of speech].[87] How do people talk on the tragic scene? Not in the way in which they talk in what we call real life. We will come to that later. So in other words, regardless of what you think, we must first try to follow Socrates. And I think Klein renders Socrates's thought adequately: that the second definition of figure is inferior to the first; and this has something to do with the fact that the whole sphere of colors is of course completely absent as such from geometry, and you do not find any figures without colors. You abstract from something, and this abstraction makes possible geometry but also distorts in a manner the whole from which it takes a part.

Mr. Schaefer: Can I ask one other question related to this? I was wondering what according to the first definition, what would one say about the sky, for instance?

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Schaefer: The sky. The sky has a color but it does not appear to have a figure, and Socrates's definition says that figure—

LS: Does it not have a figure, shape? A vault; is there not a vault?

Mr. Schaefer: The figure depends entirely on the horizon and on what's around it.

LS: Ya, but still is there not a vault of heaven, if we start truly from beginning? Is the heaven not shaped? Then we have to go into further questions, but primarily the heaven has a shape—the vault, the vault of [the heavens]. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I was wondering in what sense you meant that Socrates's first definition that figure always follows color is a philosophic definition. I mean, that[88] obviously isn't what the final result of a philosophical investigation—

LS: Socrates says strictly speaking it is a dialectical[89] answer, where we take for granted things which we must take for granted if we want to speak at all. And we do not take for granted things which we must not necessarily take for granted, but perhaps only if we enter into the confines of a particular art, a particular discipline.

Mr. Burnam: But it doesn't seem to me that that answers the question of what is figure. It says that it's that which always accompanies color, but it doesn't seem to me to answer the —

LS: Could it not be that there are things at which we can only point without rendering them completely in words? Think of the colors themselves. I mean,[90] you cannot identify, strictly speaking, the colors with wavelength, in spite of the necessary connections between colors and wavelengths—of which Socrates or Plato did not know of course, but the colors are not wave length. How can a man who does not know colors[91] learn about the colors [by speech], as is most clear in the cases of colorblind or blind people? I mean, you have to point: That's blue, that's yellow, and so on. And therefore[92] the difficulty arises if you assume that everything of which we talk must be susceptible of

being rendered by speech. That is one part of the difficulty which we have in mind. The point will become a bit clearer, I believe, because it is very different from our way of thinking, when we come to the discussion of color where Socrates, to the satisfaction of Meno, gives a definition of color which in its formal structure has a kinship to the modern scientific answers of what color is, and where the difference will come out more clearly. That we must postpone for next time. Now there was one—Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Considering this objection made of Socrates's definition, which you thought was an unfair objection, couldn't it be said that just as color is something we should all recognize and see, so is figure, and if figure has to be defined, then so does color?

LS:[93] Ya, very well, but would not the pointing out of the mutual relation—wherever you find figure you find color and wherever you find color you find figure—would this not be the maximum which could be spoken? But in the case of figure, we are not reduced.

Mr. Butterworth: That seems to be the point of the argument, but then that's not a definition of either one, is it?

LS: But[94] the question is: How can you prescribe in advance what a good definition is? The Aristotelian teaching regarding definitions has very much to do with the fact that geometry or mathematics existed and is in a way guided by that. But whether or not Aristotle himself does not go back behind that in his philosophic discussion is another matter. Leibniz, who was very much concerned with mathematizing philosophy, was astonished by the fact that Aristotle, the founder of logic, has very few definitions in his philosophic works, relatively speaking.[95]

Well, we will take up your question next time. I have an appointment, I'm sorry.

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[1] Deleted "So."
[2] Deleted "about this…say."
[3] Deleted "to"
[4] Deleted "a modern …."
[5] Deleted "that is…."
[6] Deleted "before."
[7] Deleted "We have,"
[8] Deleted "…which that view which Plato."
[9] Deleted "as…."
[10] Deleted "And we turn…."
[11] Deleted "this…in."
[12] Deleted "27."
[13] Deleted "… the."
[14] Deleted "only…."
[15] Deleted "Now why…."
[16] Deleted "must not forget…we."
[17] Deleted "to…."
[18] Deleted "Is this…."
[19] Deleted "only the…."

[20] Change from "I mean the…well the simplest transition would be moderation, temperance, as a special virtue of women and modesty is more becoming in the case of women, generally speaking, than in the case of men, according to a very general prejudice which I believe is still intelligible."
[21] Deleted "does not say."
[22] Changed from "Now this means, however, taking it on the lowest level, who questions…who questions, the ruler or the ruled, the master or the slave?"
[23] Deleted "sitting…is no longer."
[24] Deleted "anything that this is Meno…."
[25] Changed from "Socrates's."
[26] Deleted "have…we."
[27] Deleted "dialogue *Gorgias*."
[28] Deleted "Yes."
[29] Deleted "and at the same time."
[30] Deleted "Meno…and."
[31] Deleted "…three…two times."
[32] Deleted "…is not…is."
[33] Deleted "The best…the best…."
[34] Deleted "second …he."
[35] Changed from "Now that is a strange…regarding moral things that is a peculiar thing."
[36] Deleted ". You are…you are…or duty, as we might say more…."
[37] Deleted "but."
[38] Deleted "in."
[39] Deleted "Justice…."
[40] Deleted "an exact…."
[41] Deleted "That is not…that is …."
[42] Deleted "has no direct…."
[43] Deleted "Now. Yes."
[44] Deleted "In." Moved "74b-3."
[45] Deleted "In 74b-3."
[46] Deleted "he gives…."
[47] Deleted "kind of."
[48] Deleted "argument…."
[49] Deleted "over Socrates…."
[50] Deleted "…we are still…we have not."
[51] Deleted "the paragraph…."
[52] Deleted "Yeah."
[53] Deleted "Meno…."
[54] Moved "be the reason." Deleted "some."
[55] Deleted "This is."
[56]Deleted "That does not mean it at all."
[57] Deleted "Socrates assertion…."
[58] Deleted "be…."
[59] Deleted "…we must surely …this."
[60] Deleted "And this is…."
[61] Deleted "and this leads… I mean."
[62] Deleted "the."
[63] Changed from "And where the scientific, technical answers have very great advantages but in the decisive respect—are inadequate."
[64] Deleted "but"
[65] Deleted "…read the."
[66] Delete "whereas."
[67] Changed from "Because… Well, the human being is taking it to another term but human beings would not necessarily be defined with respect to virtue but in the figure-color thing it…you do have ."
[68] Deleted "a full…there must be no…."
[69] Deleted "this remains. Is this not…."
[70] Deleted "definitions must be…."

[71] Deleted “there is no….”
[72] Deleted “They must not be adequate to any things.”
[73] Deleted “this….” Moved “to this.”
[74] Deleted “have”
[75] Changed from “Now that is…in other words there is a deceptive similarity between the kind of agreement which…on which any demonstrative…any math…any geometric argument…demonstration is based and the kind of agreement which Socrates in his conversations presupposes.”
[76] Deleted “math—demonstrative”
[77] Deleted “He would try to be….”
[78] Deleted “that.”
[79] Deleted “but that is of course….”
[80] Deleted “…so much…as.”
[81] Deleted “And now…good.”
[82] Deleted “with.”
[83] Deleted “Meno does …this man came….”
[84] Deleted “it”
[85] Deleted “the first…well …that it was….”
[86] Changed from “It seems to me that a person would, I mean forgetting the geometry, if somebody, if a person didn’t know anything about geometry and if somebody said to him that figure was the limit of solid, that seems to me to be equally commonsensical, with the first one, according to which figure was gonna follow….”
[87] Deleted “you know?”
[88] Deleted “isn’t …that.”
[89] Deleted “it is an.”
[90] Deleted “if you try to…if.”
[91] Deleted “cannot.” Moved “by speech.”
[92] Deleted “…I mean.”
[93] Changed from “Yeah, but let us…very well, but, would not the pointing out of the mutual relation—wherever you find figure you find color and wherever you find color you find figure—would this not be, so to say, would this not be the maximum which could be spoken?”
[94] Deleted “who…how….”
[95] Deleted “The same thing.”

Session 5: no date

Leo Strauss: Now let us remind ourselves of the context. The *Meno* is the dialogue on virtue and a dialogue carried on by Socrates with a particularly vicious man, Meno, who comes to sight as a follower of Gorgias, as a man who remembers the opinions of others. Now without any preparation, abruptly, Meno shoots at Socrates the question as to how human beings become virtuous. We do not know why he does this, what is behind his question. Certainly it is that the initiative is entirely with Meno. Socrates does not engage in conversation with Meno in order to convert that rascal to virtue. This is clear. Socrates replies that he cannot answer Meno's question since he doesn't know what virtue is. Meno, of course, knows what virtue is. His first answer is an enumeration of the[1] virtues of various kinds of human beings; but therefore, it is not an answer to the question: What is virtue? But he implies that virtue consists in doing one's job or in doing one's job well, and the job depending on one's sex, one's age, one's social position, etc. In other words, what is implied in Meno's first answer[2] to the question of what is justice is what the *Republic* explicitly teaches regarding the "what is" of justice. But Meno is unaware of that, of course. His second answer is: Virtue consists in the ability to rule human beings.

We are concerned now with his second answer. Socrates regards it as inadequate. In the first place, it is not applicable to children and slaves, who are not supposed to be able to rule a human being. And above all, we would not call excellence the ability to rule, [when it is] not accompanied by justice. But justice itself is a virtue, and so are moderation, wisdom, and many others. Again, we see Meno has given us many virtues, as in the first answer, and we are still wondering what is the one thing which makes any virtue a virtue. Meno is helpless. Socrates tries to help him by bringing in the example of figure, *schēma*. Meno is eager to hear what is a figure. Socrates says: Figure is what always follows color. But Meno objects: That is a bad answer, a silly answer, for what is color? In other words, Meno is here eager to hear another kind of answer to the question of what is figure, another kind of answer than [the one] Socrates has given, namely, the geometric answer. And this leads to the general observation that there are two kinds of answers to the question [of] what a thing is: the geometric or mathematical, we can say, and the dialectical one.

Now the question arises why this discussion of geometry as distinguished from dialectics—or in more common parlance, of science in contradistinction to philosophy—in the *Meno* and in this particular section of the *Meno*? Now the last question finds a simple answer. The discussion of these two kinds of definition takes place in the discussion of the second answer. The second answer is the central answer of Meno,[3] [which indicates that it is] somehow the most important[4] [one]. As for the question, Why this discussion in the *Meno*?, we have to consider the background of the question to some extent. What is virtue? Of course we haven't heard anything about that except Meno's patently insufficient answers. Socrates seems to have held that virtue is knowledge. The outstanding knowledge is mathematical knowledge, but mathematics is surely not that kind of knowledge which can be identified with virtue. Or the other way around: we

cannot expect a geometric definition of virtue. Virtue is too well known to the simple man who has not had any training in mathematics whatever, and on the other hand it is too complex to be susceptible of such a mathematical definition.

Let us cast a brief glance at the *Republic*. Now in the *Republic* all virtues are in a way defined, i.e., the question What is courage? and so on and so on, and [the question] What is justice? is answered there. But all these answers are explicitly incomplete. They are not the final answer or . . . Platonic answer to this question. It is particularly striking in the case of justice. In the first book of the *Republic* Socrates proves that justice is good; but he says: Well, I have proven that without knowing what justice is, so how can he know that it is good? Now then he[5] makes clear later on what justice is on the basis of a doctrine of the soul, which consists of various parts and each part has its peculiar virtue or perfection. There is desire. The perfection or the virtue regarding desire is moderation, i.e., control of desires and so on, and justice is defined on this basis. But at the end of the whole *Republic*, in book ten, it becomes clear that we do not have through the *Republic* an adequate knowledge of the nature of the soul. How then can we have adequate knowledge of the perfections of the soul or its parts? How can we have adequate knowledge of the virtues?

Now we do find adequate answers to the question [of] what virtue is and what the individual virtues are in Aristotle's *Ethics*, and this[6] would [always] be a good test, if one is properly prepared for it, to say, when you are confronted with a Socratic discussion about a certain virtue: Look at Aristotle's answer, and say: Here we have an answer; why did not Socrates think of that? [Laughter] Was he too unprepared?[7] [Was this] an early stage of logic, as you know we might say? Or[8] were there deeper reasons why Socrates or Plato never thought of giving answers along the lines of Aristotle's in the *Ethics*? Now the answers in the *Ethics* are very beautiful and very unimpeachable. There is one manifest defect: there is no deduction of the ten or eleven virtues from a principle, so you have no guarantee of completeness. Aristotle would probably say: Well, do you know of any virtue which I have not mentioned? And I suppose we would say: Yes, you don't mention piety. And then Aristotle would have to give us an answer why he has forgotten or excluded piety, which is a long, long question.[9] Aristotle takes up the virtues as one knows them and makes some changes,[10] the forgetting of piety is the most striking one.

Another example which is very important to consider is that of Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*,[11] because here Thomas Aquinas was in a sense of course an Aristotelian. But his teaching on the virtues is indirectly based also on Plato, meaning this: there is a doctrine of the so-called four cardinal virtues, i.e., the four virtues stated in the *Republic*: courage, moderation, justice, and wisdom or prudence. And this was accepted after Plato by the Stoics and by such men like Cicero, for example, and this later Latin tradition is directly underlying the Thomistic doctrine; and here you have a principle of deduction, a principle by virtue of which you can say there are these and only these. You have a certainty regarding completeness, that nothing is forgotten. It would be interesting also to compare that. This only in [passing]. At any rate, to come back to the point from where we have started, there are no final definitions of what virtue is[12] [or of the individual parts] in Plato.

Now let us now come back to specific points. We are now concerned with the difference between the two kinds of definitions, geometrical and dialectical. Did you want to say something about this?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, I had a question that has to do with last class.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Schaefer: Meno's objection to Socrates's first definition of figure: Meno seems to be looking at this definition for a scientific definition of figure. He doesn't like Socrates's first definition because it seems unscientific.

LS: Well, all right.

Mr. Schaefer: It seems there's a certain similarity of his seeking, I think, to find some essence[13] of figure, to find a definition in the same way that Socrates is asking him for a definition of virtue. Now I was wondering whether Meno is asking a question in this form now, whereas he didn't originally start out with that sort of question—he originally started asking how is virtue taught—implies that Meno has learned something from Socrates, although he learned it badly.

LS: Ya, but not quite. It is not so simple.[14] Did he learn something? Well, strictly speaking, he was reminded by Socrates of what he had heard when he was with Gorgias. That is not[15] learning in any strict sense of the word, because you can be reminded of something which you know very superficially which you never have truly learned.[16] He is dissatisfied with Socrates's answer, and that will also prove to be true regarding Socrates's answer to the question of what color is. That is quite true. In order to appreciate it properly we have to wait until we[17] [get] to the point where Socrates[18] contrasts the two kinds of definitions clearly. If you don't mind, we'll postpone it. Now let us read in Klein's book on page 63,[19] the third paragraph—the second sentence to the end.[20]

Mr. Reinken:

> The rule demands "agreement" about terms. But the term "agreement" itself is susceptible of different interpretations. It may be the kind of agreement[i] on which Socrates bases his arguments whenever he appeals to the habitually accepted and familiar.

LS: I.e., appeals to what is agreed upon by everyone, more or less. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> There is also the need for agreement on terms in any "technical" discourse: agreement[ii] governs the method of synthetic mathematics as well as of any other

[i] Klein gives the Greek: (*homologia*).
[ii] Klein again gives the Greek: (*homologia*).

> apodeictic discipline. That is the kind of agreement[iii] Meno seems to have in mind in raising his objection in the first place."[iv]

LS: That's all we need now. So there is a difference between geometry and dialectics, but there is also a kinship between them, and this[21] causes a difficulty.[22] Now there are a few other passages in Klein in the sequel which I will read, on page 65 following. Now when Socrates has given the geometric definition of figure—after that, on page 65, paragraph three and four.

> It is clear that Socrates, following Meno, has abandoned the colloquial meaning of *schēma* [figure][v] altogether. In the definition he has just given, the word does not mean "closed surface of a visible thing" [that's the colloquial meaning—LS] but a geometrical entity, "figure," as defined, for example, in Euclid: "Figure is that which is contained by any boundary or boundaries," where "boundary," in turn, is defined as the limit[vi] of something. *Schēma* [figure] in Socrates' second definition, is a "technical" word signifying a "bounded surface area" akin to *epipedon* [surface] . . . [vii] Socrates' second statement is indeed a strictly geometrical definition.

Now then there comes a very difficult paragraph which I will read to you.

> This shift in the meaning of *schēma* [figure—LS] is justifiable because what is in question is not figure itself [of which Socrates had been speaking when he said figure is what always follows color—LS] but the right way of "defining," of coping adequately with something "universal," and finally of describing "human excellence" in *all* its manifestations. It seems, moreover, that Meno as well as we are made to face a type of definition which, whatever its merits, may be at variance with what that final task requires.

In other words, is a truly adequate definition possible as a mathematical or geometric definition? Now Klein makes it somewhat clearer what he means in the sequel at the bottom of page 65.

> We have to ask[viii] in what sense is "solid" "known" to Meno or to anyone else? [Because, as you know, in the mathematical definition figure was defined as the end of solid—LS] The geometrical meaning of *stereon* [solid—LS][ix] does not imply any solidity at all. There is hardly anything in the world less solid than a

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[iii] The Greek again.
[iv] Klein, 63.
[v] Klein gives only the Greek *schēma*. This occurs repeatedly in this section, whenever "figure" is mentioned.
[vi] Klein gives the Greek (*peras*).
[vii] Klein gives only the Greek *epipedon*. Strauss then leaves out another Greek term adduced by Klein, *epiphaneia*.
[viii] Strauss omits "however."
[ix] Cf. session 4, note iv.

> geometrical "solid." The familiarity with that geometrical term (and any other "technical" term of the same kind) is not based on any kind of direct perception [no one has ever *seen* a geometrical solid—LS] let alone of "knowledge," but simply on the *habit* of using such terms without real understanding.[x] . . . The terms which denote [these geometrical entities—LS] and out of which their definitions are constructed neither indicate what they are nor reveal their peculiar mode of being. A *technē* [an art—LS][xi] of a very different kind seems required to accomplish that.[xii]

That would be dialectics, which would make its theme what the mathematicians always presuppose but never reflect upon—the matrix of the mathematical conceptions, we can say. Now one more point, [at] the end of the page 66, if you would read that.

Mr. Reinken:

> Since Meno does not object to Socrates' geometrical definition, he, tacitly at least, acknowledges that Socrates has done his part.[xiii] That he goes back to an abandoned issue and asks Socrates to tell him about "color" at this point, is not only in keeping with his habit of expecting to be *told* about things, but is also a clear indication that he is definitely trying to postpone, and possibly to avoid, taking his turn in answering the question about excellence.[xiv] We need not merely suspect him of that any longer, as we have done before: his purpose is now comically and pitifully evident.[xv]

LS: Yes. Now we can also say Meno clearly wishes to break his promise. He reveals his injustice. He had not cut too good a figure when trying to say what virtue is, and he doesn't like that. He is a lover of superiority—a lover of victory, as the Greeks say.[23] Therefore he tries to avoid keeping his promise. That is a very common thing and not limited to arch-villains. Now let us continue in the text, 76a9, when Socrates had satisfied Meno's desire to [24][be told] what figure is, but now he wants to know what color, which Socrates had mentioned in his definition together with figure, [is]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] And what do you say of color, Socrates?
> [SOC.] How overbearing of you, Meno, to press an old man with demands for answers, when you will not trouble yourself to recollect and tell me what account Gorgias gives of virtue!

LS: Ya, "What Gorgias says virtue to be." You see, Socrates rebukes Meno jocularly for his *hybris*, his insolent pride, and he emphasizes again that Meno should remember,

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[x] Strauss skips over several sentences, which discuss the famous parallel passage on hypotheses in the *Republic*.
[xi] Cf. session 4, note iv.
[xii] Klein, 65-66.
[xiii] Klein notes "(cf. 75 b)."
[xiv] Klein has only the Greek: *aretē*.
[xv] Klein, 66.

recollect what according to Gorgias virtue is. In other words: You[25] don't have any opinion of your own; I know that. What does your revered master say? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] When you have answered my question, Socrates, I will answer yours.
> [SOC.] One might tell even blindfolded, Meno, by the way you discuss, that you are handsome and still have lovers. (76a8-b5)

LS: Yes. Now you see Meno repeats his promise—I will answer you after you have told me what color is—after he has broken it. You can see that he is not a very reliable man, and Socrates will not trust him. Socrates presents this relation of Meno to him not as that of a would-be master to a potential slave, but that of the beloved to the lover. Socrates is apt to love handsome young men, but he doesn't indicate that he is a lover of Meno in particular. He loves beautiful young men in general, but surely not Meno in particular. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Why so?
> [SOC.] Because you invariably speak in a peremptory tone, after the fashion of spoilt beauties, holding as they do a despotic—a tyrannic[xvi] power so long as their bloom is on them. You have also, I daresay, made a note of my weakness for handsome people. So I will indulge you, and answer.
> [MEN.] You must certainly indulge me. (76b6-c3)

LS: Yes. So the beloved-lover relation, it appears, does have something in common with the master-slave relation or tyrant-subject relation. Socrates is willing to do Meno another favor. He does not speak here any more of Meno's obligation, which Meno has hitherto evaded, as we have seen. Yes. So Socrates is now willing to[26] do Meno the favor of answering the question of what color is. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then would you like me to answer you in the manner of Gorgias, which you would find easiest to follow?
> [MEN.] I should like that, of course.

LS: Yes. So Meno would like to hear from Socrates Gorgias's answer.[27] Should he not have heard it from Gorgias himself? Is he a sort of dropout, or has he forgotten, or does he wish to test Socrates?[28] This we do not know. But he surely wishes to remain within the circle of notions familiar to him. He doesn't want to hear any[29] non-Gorgian things. This is safe to say. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Do not both of you say there are certain effluences of existent things, as Empedocles held?

[xvi] Mr. Reinken is looking at the Greek. The Loeb reads "despotic," but "tyrannical" is a more literal translation of the Greek "*turannos*."

[MEN.] Certainly.

LS: So in other words, Gorgias himself is a follower—of Empedocles, in this case.

Mr. Reinken:

[SOC.] And passages into which and through which the effluences pass?
[MEN.] To be sure.
[SOC.] And some of the effluences fit into various passages, while some are too small or too large?
[MEN.] That is so.
[SOC.] And further, there is what you call sight?
[MEN.] Yes.
[SOC.] So now "conceive my meaning," as Pindar says: colour is an effluence of figures, commensurate with sight and sensible.
[MEN.] Your answer, Socrates, seems to me excellently put.
[SOC.] Yes, for I expect you find its terms familiar—

LS: Ya, "For it has perhaps been said according to your habits," or "habituation." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

and at the same time I fancy you observe that it enables you to tell what sound and smell are, and numerous other things of the kind.
[MEN.] Certainly. (76c4-e2)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. In other words, they also would have to be interpreted as effluences, adapted not to the eye but to the ear or to the other sense organs. Now we have a certain familiarity with this kind of definitions in modern times. I'll give you an example from Hobbes's *Leviathan* in the second chapter: "Color is a seeming or fancy caused by an external body which presses the eye," which means color is not a quality of a body, which would be the simple direct answer. This view, the commonsense view, is untrue according to Hobbes, and in order to give the true answer you have to give an answer in terms of the origins or genesis of colors. And in a way, that is what Socrates or Gorgias or Empedocles did. The effluences from things hitting the eye, this is color. You see the difference between color as a certain quality of bodies, and the answer given here, whether in the Hobbean way or the Empedoclean way, is [that] an answer where this quality of the body, *visual* quality of the body, is replaced by an answer in terms of origin or genesis. These are the two kinds of definitions which correspond to what we would say today, the scientific answer—or think of specific colors and wavelength.[30] Green is then that wavelength[31], and where the peculiarity of green is forgotten in favor of something which[32] applies to all colors, [namely], that they are wavelengths, the qualitative differences are reduced to quantitative differences. This is not identical with what Empedocles does, but it has a certain similarity. Now let us[33] first finish this part of the dialogue.

Mr. Reinken: "It is an answer in the high poetic style—"

LS: No,[34] let us be more literal. "For it is a tragic answer, Meno." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] It is a tragic answer, Meno, and so more agreeable to you than that about figure.
> [MEN.] Yes, it is.
> [SOC.] But yet, son of Alexidemus, I am inclined to think the other was the better of the two; and I believe you also would prefer it, if you were not compelled, as you were saying yesterday, to go away before the mysteries, and could stay awhile and be initiated.
> [MEN.] But I should stay, Socrates, if you would give me many such answers. (76e3-77a2)

LS: "If you would tell me many such things." Yes. Now regarding the word tragic here, that means something like high sounding or grand, but also referring to mythical. For example, in the eighth book of the *Republic*, when Socrates gives his account of the genesis of the lower kind of regimes, how they came into being out of the best regime, this is also a tragic account according to Socrates. Tragic does not have the meaning here of a sad event as it is used today—if someone is hit by a car, it is a tragic event—but it means here [something] like grand, high-sounding. He calls Meno here by his father's name for the first time. Now the father, Alexidemus, that means such things as the defender of the *dēmos*, or a man who keeps the *dēmos* off, warding [the *demos*] off. In other words, [it is unclear whether he][35] defends the *dēmos* or defends himself against the *dēmos*. And there is a connection between tragedy and the *dēmos*, as you can easily see from the second book of the *Laws* where tragedy is described as the most popular of all the forms of art, more than comedy or epic poetry and so on. Yes.

Now there is another point here which we will [consider]. The main point is that Socrates restates here [that] there are two kinds of definitions, the one which he had given—he doesn't say it is simply good; he says it is better than the one which Meno likes—and let us call it the dialectical definition; and the other is a mathematical definition. Meno likes to hear these things, as we have seen from the end of[36] the passage which we just read, and he is willing even to stay on in Athens, although he has urgent business elsewhere, if Socrates will tell him these things. Now he has a kind of curiosity, but a peculiar curiosity. He would like to hear things of this *kind*: Gorgian things, or things which he has somehow heard from Gorgias. Yes?

Student: Would you explicate the reference to sacred rites and initiation?

LS: Ya, there were mysteries, and the Eleusian mysteries are the most famous, and there was initiation into them. Now Socrates applies this to what he is doing. There are mysteries there—say, the mysteries of philosophy—and there is an initiation into them. And that jocular expression is prepared by the fact that Aristophanes, in his Socratic comedy, *The Clouds*, presents Socrates in primary instruction of his students as an initiation with regular initiation rites, where especially the power—*kartareia*, the power to stand toil and pain, the resistance to toil and pain is tested. For example, the fellow has

to sit in a garment full of fleas, and if he is not able to bear that with equanimity he is no good.[xvii] That is a comic account; you can also[37] give a more worthy account of it.[38] So Plato accepts that, that one needs an initiation into philosophy, and this initiation is not of course an elementary instruction[39] but something which tests the character of the man. Someone raises his hand, yes?

Student: Mr. Strauss, at 76e when he makes a reference to the definition of figure being better than the one of color, to which definition of figure do you feel he refers?

LS: That is a good question. I would say[40] [that] it can only refer to Socrates's own definition. But I admit that the wording is ambiguous; it could also refer to the second answer and, come to think of it, it would make sense from Socrates's point of view to say that[41] even the geometric definition of figure is better than this physical definition of color. So I would say, come to think of it,[42] [that] Socrates means the definition of color is inferior to the two definitions of figure. I think that is necessary to say. Yes, because mathematics has a certain quality of exactness which this kind of physics, premodern physics as presented here by Empedocles, lacks. Yes, I thank you for raising this question.

Now there are a few points in Klein. We cannot possibly read everything. On page 70, bottom, Klein refers to the fact that color has a relation to real and pretended virtue. That is of course something jocular, but you find it in Xenophon's *Spartan Constitution*, chapter five, where this comes out.[xviii] We understand that; a ruddy complexion would seem to indicate virtue to a higher degree than a pale complexion, especially in a military society. So to have color is the sign of outdoor life and not this unnatural life in a house—for men, yes. Women should stay at home, at least according to the Athenian view. The Spartans said women should also be in the *palaistrai*, the exercise places, but this was not regarded as good for female virtue, and therefore Helen is the great example of what happens to Spartan women. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: The relation of color to real—

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Reinken: and to pretended excellence is preserved in the phrase, "a colorable pretext."

LS: Yes, yes. And also of course pretense means laying on color. And now *schēma*, figure, also has something of this implication because the verb derived from it, *schēmatizō*, and that means something like giving oneself airs, so that both *schēma* and *chrōma* have this somewhat comical relation to the question of virtue. This only in passing. I think we can leave it at that.

[xvii] *Clouds* 144ff, 258ff.
[xviii] *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, v.8-9.

Now[43] is this much clear: that Socrates surely suggests that there are two kinds of definitions, and one kind, preferred by Meno, let us call it call[44] the geometric or scientific definition, is inferior to the other kind, the dialectical one. And the definition of virtue for which Socrates seeks cannot be geometrical. It can only be dialectical because it must be given with full understanding of all the implications by starting from what all men agree [to], admit, are familiar with. This at least is the main point. Now this is the end of the discussion of Meno's second answer, and if you have no—Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: In 75d[45] Socrates, in preparing his second answer, the geometric one, calls it more dialectic.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Bruell: Simply referring to the fact that they would proceed from what is familiar to Meno?

LS:[46] Well, this is a provisional statement, where dialectic is opposed not to geometrical but to eristic. We discussed that at the last meeting. An eristic man is one who wants to win an argument, and he does not really enter into a conversation. He occupies a position, as it were, and says: Expel me from it. And that is always[47] much more difficult than to establish a position. And the dialectician is in this sense, in the Socratic sense, a man who wants to have a friendly conversation because both [he and his interlocutor] are concerned, equally concerned with finding the truth, and hence they are friends and not people who are fighting each other. [48]But now[49] dialectic is also distinguished from geometric. Of course geometric is not eristic; the geometers among themselves behave in a very friendly way and we have a Platonic example in the *Theaetetus*, where you see very nice mathematicians without any nastiness whatever. Good. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.]: "Well then, I will spare no endeavour, both for your sake and for my own, to tell such things—"[xix]

LS: Meaning, as you like to hear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "but I fear I may not succeed in keeping for long on that level. But come now—"

LS: Ya, just "to not be able to tell you many such things; a few, I could tell you." Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "not many. But come now, you in your turn must try and fulfill your promise by telling me what virtue is in a general way—"

LS: Ya, or "the whole," "as a whole," and not only parts.

[xix] Mr. Reinken is looking at the Greek. In original: "continue in that style."

Mr. Reinken: "as a whole; and you must stop producing a plural from the singular, as the wags—"

LS: More simply, "many out of one"—leave it entire, don't break up the whole thing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "as the wags say whenever one breaks something, but leave virtue whole and sound, and tell me what it is. The pattern you have now got from me."

LS: Yes,[50] there is a great change here. Socrates does no longer ask Meno to give him Gorgias's answer, perhaps because Gorgias's answers have proven to be inadequate. Socrates claims that it is to his interest to tell Meno things of this kind. Why? Does he wish to be loved by Meno, or does he wish to be spared by Meno? That we cannot say. And now we hear Meno's third and final answer to the question of what virtue is.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Well, in my view, Socrates, virtue is, in the poet's words, "to enjoy the fine things[xx] and be able for them"; and that, I say, is virtue—to desire what is fine[xxi] and be able to procure it. (77a3-b5)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now "fine,"[51] the word *kalon*, can also be translated by "beautiful" or "noble." And it could also mean in the grammatical structure here "to desire the beautiful beings," especially beautiful human beings. It could also mean that. It is very . . . Now Meno, you see, quotes again, but this time a poet, not Gorgias.

Student: Who is the poet?

LS: It's unknown. But the key point is this: that Socrates has now compelled Meno to abandon Gorgias's authority. That's a very great step. Now the poet speaks of the fine, beautiful, and noble things, and that is of course fitting for poets: they use high language, lofty, noble language, language befitting noble things. But since it is a poetic utterance, it is in need of an interpretation, of a translation into prose, which Meno supplies. He interprets enjoy, *chairein*, as meaning desiring. That is quite interesting. Obviously enjoying something and desiring it are not the same thing. We can enjoy quite a few things without desiring them, and perhaps the highest enjoyments are of this nature. Meno apparently cannot imagine that one might enjoy something without desiring it; he is a[52] possessive, [grabbing] fellow.[53] Now at any rate, desire for the beautiful or noble, fine things is surely a necessary ingredient of virtue. But this makes sense only under one condition—I mean, in other words, not only the capacity to lay hold of them, but the desiring is already an ingredient of virtue, which makes sense only when not all men [but only some] desire the noble things, the beautiful things. A simple proof of this example is the beginning of the third book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Xenophon shows how Socrates behaves toward those who desire the beautiful, fine, or noble things. That means here on the crudest level [those] who are desirous for honors, ambitious people,

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[xx] In original: "rejoice in things honourable"
[xxi] In original: "honourable"

with the implication that not all men but only a minority of men is in any true sense of the word ambitious.

So the third definition has again this grave implication: that virtue in any serious sense is a preserve of a part of mankind, a preserve of a minority. Let us call them again the masters: only the masters desire the beautiful things and are able to get them. So again, Meno makes us consider whether the difference between masters and slaves is not very important for defining virtue. But whereas the first definition admitted there is a virtue of slaves, as I'm sure you will remember, the second and third definitions exclude the possibility of a virtue of slaves. So we have now heard the third [definition, which is also] the first non-Gorgian definition. Now let us see what Klein has to say[54] on page 71, second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Thereupon Meno makes his *second attempt* to state what human excellence in its 'generality' is."

LS: We have seen that in one sense it is the third attempt, but, all right.

Mr. Reinken: "But he does not take into account any of the patterns presented to him."

LS: In other words,[55] it is not an answer along the lines of [either] the two Socratic definitions of figure or the definition of color which he gave. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> This is what he says: "Well now, it seems to me, Socrates, that human excellence is, as the poet says, 'both to take delight in high things and to master them.' And I, too[xxii], say that this is excellence: longing for[xxiii] the high things, to be able to get hold of them."
>
> It is as if Meno, without any effort, lets his memory speak for him again. This time it is a poet, not Gorgias, whom he quotes.[xxiv]

LS: Now let us stop here. That is quite true. But we must also not forget that there is a difference [between whether] he follows Gorgias [and] abandon[ing] this relation. Yes. Now let us[56] come to the discussion of this third answer. Does it make sense to you that virtue consists in a certain refinement, we can say, that one has a sense for the beautiful things in the first place? But this is not enough. That would be[57] compatible with an entirely passive life. It is also necessary to have the ability to get them, to get these fine things. Is his answer intelligible? I don't say whether it's true, because we have not yet begun to examine it. Is it an intelligible answer?[58] What would be a modern parallel to that answer? How would it be stated in modern terms, because these things are of course still alive?

Student: In culture—

[xxii] Klein inserts "(*kai egō*)."
[xxiii] Klein inserts "(*epithymounta*)."
[xxiv] Klein, 71.

LS:[59] But if you take the beautiful things in rather—think especially of art, [the] "culture vulture" so-called. Yes, but [60][Meno] means of course [something] broader, wider. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: When they teach them of the melting pot and the American dream; and then teach them to work nine to five, and they will have a beautiful house in the suburbs and better children and—the good things of the great society.[xxv]

LS: Yes, but it is important that he doesn't mention here the good things at all, but speaks only of the fine or noble things. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Do you say that he who desires the fine things[xxvi] desires the good?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Implying that there are some who desire the evil and others the good? Do not all men, in your opinion, my dear sir, desire the good?
> [MEN.] I think not.
> [SOC.] There are some who desire the evil?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] Thinking the evil to be good, do you mean, or actually recognizing it to be evil, and desiring it nevertheless?
> [MEN.] Both, I believe.
> [SOC.] Do you really believe, Meno, that a man knows the evil to be evil, and still desires it?
> [MEN.] Certainly. (77b6-c7)

LS: Ya, let us stop here for a moment. Now you see Socrates induces Meno at the beginning of this answer, without any difficulty, to identify the[61] beautiful or noble things with the good things. In other words, there is no difficulty for him; he can easily switch from the one to the other. Now this brings in a great difficulty: whereas it makes sense to say that only some men desire the noble or fine things, it is impossible to say [that] only some men desire the good things. That is the nerve of Socrates's argument. All men desire the good but not all men desire the noble or fine. But to come back: Meno says that not all men desire the good things. Some men desire evil things while knowing that they are evil. Now this could perhaps throw some light on Meno's diabolical character, but I don't believe this is helpful. But it is a necessary consequence from his original assertion, which implied that not all men desire the noble things; and now if the noble [things] are identified with the good it follows necessarily [that] not all men desire the good things. But the present assertion which he makes now, that not all men desire the good things, cannot merely be a consequence of the substitution of the good for the noble things, for those men who do not desire the noble things do not desire the ugly things, the base things, knowing that they are base. Meno has in mind a very well-known phenomenon

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[xxv] Mr. Reinken is probably referring to measures introduced by President Lyndon B. Johnson, beginning in 1964, to secure greater equality and economic opportunity for all Americans. In a speech in May 1964 he called this "the Great Society."

[xxvi] In original: "the honourable."

rendered famous by a Latin verse: *video meliora proboque*; *deteriora sequor*: "I see and approve of the better things, but I follow, I choose, the worse things."[xxvii] Whenever a human being succumbs to a temptation which he knows to be a temptation, this happens. And nothing is more frequent, unfortunately. Now this phenomenon which is so well known shows, incidentally, that it is hard to say [that] virtue is identical with knowledge; because [of] Medea, [it] was said that [she] knew the good but she did the opposite; and if this is so, then virtue cannot [be knowledge, and] if virtue is not knowledge then it cannot be acquired by teaching, as we will see later in this dialogue.

So Meno has made this point hitherto, which is perfectly intelligible up to this point. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] What do you mean by "desires"? Desires the possession of it?
> [MEN.] Yes; what else could it be?
> [SOC.] And does he think the evil benefits him who gets it, or does he know that it harms him who has it?
> [MEN.] There are some who think the evil is a benefit, and others who know that it does harm.
> [SOC.] And, in your opinion, do those who think the evil a benefit know that it is evil?
> [MEN.] I do not think that at all.
> [SOC.] Obviously those who are ignorant of the evil do not desire it, but only what they suppose to be good, though it is really evil; so that those who are ignorant of it and think it it good are really desiring the good. Is not that so?
> [MEN.] It would seem to be so in their case. (77c7-e4)

LS: This is the simple case. There are human beings who desire evil, bad things, while believing that the bad things are helpful. They do not desire the bad things as bad things; they are simply mistaken. They think certain things are good which in fact are bad. And this of course can easily be remedied by enlightenment. You show them that this particular food or drink will harm them and then they won't eat and drink it anymore. At least in some cases that is what doubtless takes place. If you say "That is poison," people in many cases abstain from accepting it. A more interesting case is the following, to which he turns in 77e5.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well now, I presume those who, as you say, desire the evil, and consider that the evil harms him who gets it, know that they will be harmed by it?
> [MEN.] They needs must.
> [SOC.] But do they not hold that those who are harmed are miserable in proportion to the harm they suffer?
> [MEN.] That too must be.
> [SOC.] And are not the miserable ill-starred?
> [MEN.] I think so.

[xxvii] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7, 20-21.

> [SOC.] Then is there anyone who wishes to be miserable and ill-starred?
> [MEN.] I do not suppose there is, Socrates.
> [SOC.] No one, then, Meno, desires evil, if no one desires to be such an one: for what is being miserable but desiring evil and obtaining it?
> [MEN.] It seems that what you say is true, Socrates, and that nobody desires evil. (77e5-78b2)

LS: Ya. Evil, that must be properly understood. Evil is here meant not merely in a moral sense, so I would perhaps translate it by "bad" rather than by "evil." The morally evil would be a special case of the bad things, but those who desire bad things while believing that the bad things are harmful would be people who wish to be miserable. But no one wishes to be miserable; hence no one wishes the bad *qua* bad. That is a simple argument. In our age this is not so evident as it was for Socrates, and even also for Meno after a little bit of an effort. So the consequence would seem to be [that] there is no difference between those who desire the good things and those who desire the bad things, except that the latter are mistaken. But if this is so, they must be enlightened and then they will act sensibly, or to make a long story short: virtue is knowledge. If virtue is ability to get the good things, which is a crude definition of virtue, then virtue is knowledge. As far as the desire for the good things is concerned, there is no difference among human beings: they all want the good things. And in particular, there is no difference in this respect between masters and slaves.[62] [Yet this distinction] is not used, [and it] [63]is even avoided here, because what was translated "ill-starred" is in Greek *kakodaimōn*, the opposite of *eudaimōn—eudaimōn*, which is ordinarily translated by "happiness," but happiness with a[64] somewhat religious overtone: *daimōn* means "deity." So one could almost translate it by "blessed"—almost. But we translate it by "happiness," and the ambiguity of the word in Greek is as large as that of our word "happiness."

So the desire for happiness as such is common to all men. It[65] means something very important because we are concerned with the question of an agreement among human beings. The desire for happiness is the ground which is by nature common to all men. There is no need for an explicit agreement about that, except to avoid a verbal obfuscation. It is *the* starting point of dialectics because it also gives this pursuit of truth[66] [its] unity. What is that one thing which we all seek more or less dimly, but ultimately we mean the same [thing]? This desire common to all gives rise to the question: How should one live?, i.e., what is happiness properly understood? Now it is this question which leads to that knowledge that is identical with virtue. But the question of how to live is, it seems, not a question for Meno. He knows what he wants. He knows what virtue is, but perhaps he does not know how virtue is acquired. Remember his initial question. Perhaps this question was meant seriously; then he would know how he became that marvelous man he admires himself for [being]. In other words, he doesn't know whether and to what extent he owes his virtue to Gorgias. That would be a question of some interest to Meno. You know, if he would have to tell himself he owes his virtue chiefly to Gorgias, that would not flatter his ego, as they say today, ya? And that is possible. Perhaps he doesn't wish to be much indebted to Gorgias; that would be plausible. So we[67] make now a first suggestion to the effect that the initial question was not frivolous or not merely a

consequence, an outcome of the fact that he desired to hear Socrates's answer and then boast of that conversation with Socrates back home.

Now let us consider the question from another point of view, I mean the question which is here in this form: Now granted that all men desire happiness, does this prove that no man desires bad things although he knows that they are bad? Does this follow?[68] And perhaps since there may be some difference between present-day feelings and feelings in earlier times, let us think first of what we know of Greek feelings about that. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: The pleasant things were different from the good things.

LS: Ya, but different, and therefore we have to make a distinction between good pleasant things and bad pleasant things.

Mr. Bruell: And one might desire happiness thinking that he could be happy through the bad pleasant things.

LS. Yes. What did you want—

Student: Doesn't this relate back to the *Gorgias*, where Socrates tries to show that[69] [even if you] physically suffer injustice, you are still happier than if you commit one?

LS: That is one of the grave paradoxical consequences of the Socratic understanding of virtue or happiness. But still, Socrates says you are less unhappy. He doesn't say that you are happy if you suffer unjustly. He is not a Stoic. Yes. Now but Aristotle, to take this most famous example,[70] starts[71] from the fact that all men desire happiness. And yet he admits that there are men lacking self-control, and the men lacking self-control—that is a term used with some precision by Aristotle—are those who know that is wrong, say, to smoke, and yet do smoke. So in other words, there is a possibility of being overcome by desire. Aristotle's solution is: Yes, men are overcome by passion. They are, as it were, drunk: something befuddles them—charmed, as Plato would say. And therefore the man lacking self-control is not the bad man proper, who of set purpose chooses the base things because he is blind to the noble or fine things as such, like the crook who despises the squares[xxviii] as fools. He has no awareness of "quote the values unquote" of the squares, and therefore he is utterly incompetent. But[72] the man lacking self-control is not a crook; he is only a weak man overcome by desire.

And there are [other] cases. To take another experience of some interest, I knew a man who was quite intelligent, very well informed,[73] and when you talked to him privately he was very easy and useful, but who was no longer the same man when he stood in front of an audience,[74][even] small,[75] [but] especially [when] large—preferably large, because that simply intoxicated him. He was wholly unable to withstand that temptation. These things exist. Socrates of course would say he was not fully aware of the poverty, the

[xxviii] "Square" was a popular slang word in American English in the 1960s. It referred to a person who adhered to society's norms. The "counterculture" in the late 1960s valued transgression rather than conformity.

emptiness of applause or fame. But that is not a preserve of Aristotle, that he makes that distinction; you find it also in Plato, of course. Knowledge is not enough in order to remain incorrupt. Compare *Republic* 496b to c. Or to take an example from the *Laws*, in order to be a good political leader, you must be something like a good captain of a ship,[xxix][76] and that means you have to know piloting very well—that's knowledge. But you also must be immune to seasickness. Now you can know everything about piloting and yet be not immune to seasickness. So that is of course known to Plato as well as to Aristotle.

At any rate, we have now established the point. It seems that all men desire the good, but men—many men, most men—are mistaken as to what is good. And this, since it is an error, seems at first glance to be a very simple thing: enlighten these people and then they will pursue the good things. That it is a bit more complicated, I think we all—[77]even the youngest of us, who have gone beyond the stage of kindergarten—know[78]. Or do you have any difficulty? Yes?

Student: Why does Meno[79] deny that those people who think the evil a benefit know that it is evil? Why doesn't he hold to the position that well, I know it's evil but it benefits me; it's evil in the sense that it's bad but I get benefit from it—

LS:[80] Let us take the crook who admits that he is a crook, i.e., something bad. Crooked is not straight. And that could be. Is this the point?

Same Student: Yeah, I mean—

LS: So in other words, he would say: I know I'm a criminal, i.e., a bad man. A bad man may be proud to be a bad man. But what does he truly mean by that? He accepts this term applied to him by the majority of his countrymen, but he uses it all the time in quotation marks. He doesn't mean it. He regards himself as a good man, according to his understanding of goodness. Now there are of course cases of people who have been driven to despair of human justice, for example, and then are enemies of society on this ground. And they admit that it is something—but they admit of course that one ought to be just, but if society is unjust, then one must do the things which society regards as unjust but which in fact are truly just. You could talk with such a man.

Same Student: But that case is the same, it seems to me, as the case of the man earlier described by Socrates. Socrates says: Do they think evil to be good when they seek it or do they actually recognize it to be evil? Meno says that both can happen,[81] [and said earlier] that people can desire the good although recognizing it to be evil. Now the reason that he's defeated by Socrates is because he contradicts himself later on and[82] denies that people could have the evil and know it [to be] evil, and yet get the benefit. Now we know Meno is a person who is trying to win victories in his arguments with Socrates, so why doesn't he try to preserve his position by following lower down here—

[xxix] Strauss might be referring to *Laws* 640d4-641a2.

LS: But is not the most simple answer this: that he has not reflected sufficiently on what it means to desire[83] bad things? To desire morally evil things is—if Meno is already the criminal we presume, it is no difficulty for Meno to understand. But Meno surely doesn't want to be miserable. Now think of Mr. Giancana.[xxx] Surely he wishes to have all the good things, the good things of which he knows, but he doesn't wish to be miserable. He[84] is now very miserable in the jails, you know. So I think Meno simply has not considered that desiring the bad things means, if it is elaborated, desiring one's own unhappiness. Now we have heard so much about people who like to torment themselves and in this sense like to be miserable. But the question is whether this is not only a complicated form of desiring happiness. I mean,[85] if they despair of becoming happy they might find it as a help to torment themselves. In other words, that is a complicated derivative mode of the desire for happiness; that would be of course Plato's and Aristotle's answer. There is no desire, no natural primary desire for the bad as bad. There can be a derivative one; for example, people can get kicks, if this is a proper term, out of bad things, but then of course it is their belief in their own courage, bravery, or however you call it which is the good which they desire in seemingly striving for the bad. This is no serious difficulty. Are you satisfied now?

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: Good. Now where were we? So let us read the sequel,

Mr. Reinken. 78b.

LS: B3, yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well now, you were saying a moment ago that virtue is the desire and ability for good?
> [MEN.] Yes, I was.
> [SOC.] One part of the statement—the desire—belongs to our common nature, and in this respect one man is no better than another?
> [MEN.] Apparently.

LS: "Common nature" is not there. "Is available to all."

Mr. Reinken:

> Belongs to all, and in this respect, one man no better than another?
> [MEN.] Apparently.
> [SOC.] But it is plain that if one man is not better than another in this, he must be superior in the ability.
> [MEN.] Certainly.

[xxx] Sam Giancana (1908-1975) was a leading Chicago mafia boss who had just been arrested and imprisoned in 1965.

LS: So in other words, the desire is common to all men and therefore that cannot constitute the virtue of a man, the excellence of a man, because all have it by nature. And the difference, the excellence, can only lie in the ability to lay hold of[86] [what one desires]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then virtue, it seems by your account, is ability to procure goods.
> [MEN.] I entirely agree, Socrates, with the view which you now take of the matter. (78b3-c2)

LS: Yes. So naturally, after he has forgotten completely the noble things, where the enjoyment of them or the desire for them alone would be a distinction, [now] he speaks only of the good things which all men desire, say, health, and other things of which we will speak later. So desiring, to mention the main point, desiring or wishing [for] the good things as distinguished from the fine or noble things, cannot possibly be virtue—only the ability to get them. Yes. Now?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then let us see whether your statement is true in another respect; for very likely you may be right. You say virtue is the ability to procure goods?
> [MEN.] I do.
> [SOC.] And do you not mean by goods such things as health and wealth?
> [MEN.] Yes, and I include the acquisition of gold and silver, and of state honours and offices.
> [SOC.] Are there any things besides this sort, that you class as goods?
> [MEN.] No, I refer only to everything of that sort.
> [SOC.] Very well: procuring gold and silver is virtue, according to Meno, the ancestral friend of the Great King. (78c3-d3)

LS: Yes. The Great King is of course the Persian king.[87] Now since we know now that virtue means getting for oneself the good things, the only question is: What are the good things? After all, that is perhaps not so simple. Meno gives a very simple answer, which is as well known and powerful today as at any time. Needless to say that virtue is not mentioned here. Meno will not make this mistake again. Virtue is the ability to get the good things; how can it belong to the good things? He would never say that.[88] So perhaps he would have counted virtue among the noble and fine things; this we do not know. Surely[89] [this much] is clear: Meno doesn't even dream of regarding virtue as a part of the good things, a part of happiness, but [a part of] some things much more interesting. We wouldn't expect that from anyone. What's much more interesting: What does he not mention here at all among the good things, which he could have done? We have seen what he says: health, wealth, gold and silver, and honors in the city and ruling positions. What kind of things which such people like Meno and many, many more—in a way we all—desire which could also be mentioned?

Mr. Reinken: Dinners and concerts?

LS: Yes, but only give the general—

Mr. Reinken: The pleasures.

LS: Pleasures. That is very interesting. I mean that this [reveals] an important part of his character. He doesn't show any interest in pleasures as pleasures. There are many wicked people who are driven to their wickedness because they desire pleasures, but Meno does not belong to them. Now there is a certain connection between the pleasurable things and the fine things. Some of the pleasures, at any rate, have a certain splendor which connects them with the fine things, and that is of course true of sexual love more than of eating and drinking. I say sexual love in contradistinction to sex, which is such a general term that one doesn't knows what people mean by that—except one knows it all too well. So there is a certain splendor [which] may be connected with the pleasant things, with the higher pleasures, and which connects them with the noble things. I think it is very important to repeat that Meno lacks this sense. That is not his motivation.[90] There are gay fellows, gay people who love to laugh, for example. Meno never laughs; that goes without saying. Glaucon, for example, in the *Republic* laughs. And there are other people, also wicked people, who laugh, but Meno is not one of them. There is a certain strange dryness about him which is a part of his character and which we must observe. Yes. Now let us perhaps read the end of this passage and we will discuss it at greater length next time.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Tell me, do you add to such procuring, Meno, that it is to be done justly and piously—

LS: In other words, Socrates does here exactly the same [as] what he had done before: All right, [virtue entails] procuring the good things, [such as] wealth, health, and so on, but [only], I hope, in a decent manner, because otherwise[91] I could no longer call it virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> or is this indifferent to you, but even though a man procures these things unjustly, do you call them virtue all the same?
> [MEN.] Surely not, Socrates.
> [SOC.] Rather, vice.
> [MEN.] Yes, of course.
> [SOC.] Then it seems that justice or temperance or holiness or some other part of virtue must accompany the procuring of these things; otherwise it will not be virtue, though it provides one with goods.
> [MEN.] Yes, for how, without these, could it be virtue?

LS: You see he is very easy to deal with. He doesn't put up any resistance. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And not to procure gold and silver, when it would be unjust—what we call the want of such things—is virtue, is it not?

> [MEN.] Apparently.
> [SOC.] So the procuring of this sort of goods will be no more virtue than the want of them; but it seems that whatever comes accompanied by justice will be virtue, and whatever comes without any such quality, vice.
> [MEN.] I agree that it must be as you say. (78d3-79a2)

LS: Ya, "It seems to be necessary as you speak." Now this is of course very grave. Only the just acquisition of the good things can be virtue, and hence the acquisition or possession of these good things is[92] irrelevant as far as virtue is concerned. The only thing which counts is justice or piety. The poor man, a slave, may possess virtue because virtue doesn't consist in the ability to acquire but [in] the ability to acquire justly. Meno has been brought to agree to the view that the only thing which counts is virtue—a wonderful result. Why does Socrates not leave it at that and exhort Meno from now on to act according to that view? Meno agrees to this. Why does he not do it? Because Socrates apparently doesn't do senseless things, things which are hopeless. Meno wouldn't act on that exhortation, and the reason is that Meno agrees to that view not because he is convinced of it but only because it follows from what people say, from the things generally accepted—which does not necessarily mean that he is a hypocrite but that he simply is, as it would be called today, an other-directed man,[xxxi] and therefore he doesn't truly have convictions about it. I think we have to leave it at this point. We have a few more minutes, and we have omitted a few important considerations which we will take up next time. Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: I wanted to ask, when Meno agrees that the good things are health and wealth and gold and silver and state offices, is the implication that these are what he would have regarded as fine and noble things?

LS: Ya, that is the point. Surely these are the things—he doesn't know of any other noble things. He does mention honors and ruling positions here, but as is shown by the fact that he went over from the noble things or the fine things to the good things without any difficulty whatever, he is much more concerned with the solid advantages, with gain, than with honor. That is the point. And that [is what] I meant by the dryness. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Is the view possible by this argument that mere justice without the ability also to acquire things—the good things, justly—would not be virtue?

LS: That[93] becomes then a long question, whether the ability to acquire justly does not also presuppose an ability to acquire.

Mr. Bruell: That is simply forgotten.

LS: Yes. That is of course a very grave question, and this leads to the problem which one can—I have often stated that. [LS writes on blackboard] It can be stated roughly in an Aristotelian schema. Happiness or bliss and the practice of virtue, plus what Aristotle

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[xxxi] In *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), authors David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney distinguished between "inner-directed" and "other-directed" individuals.

calls equipment—you know, you must be healthy, otherwise you wouldn't be happy or not very happy; and also you must be reasonably well off, and all these other things. Now if this is shown to a young boy who [is] just[94] begin[ning] to wonder how to live, and he knows you can't have virtue without the equipment, he might fall for this great sophism: [95]Since you must have equipment, I will first try to get the equipment and the virtue afterward. [Laughter] The trouble is only that such people who argue that way will never think of acquiring virtue because they will spend their whole lives in getting equipment. [Laughter] Something of this difficulty is here.

Mr. Bruell: Except suppose the good things are not the things which Meno lists?

LS: Well, but they are good things. I mean, would you deny that health is a good thing?

Mr. Bruell: No, not—but—

LS: I mean even wealth, it depends—wealth is often very troublesome, I understand, and then perhaps only a small fortune is truly desirable. But still destitution is not a pleasant or desirable condition.

Mr. Bruell: No, but perhaps there are other, better things than the ones he lists.

LS: You mean, for example?

Mr. Bruell: Well, wisdom.

LS: Ya, now that is of course quite true, that wisdom doesn't exist in Meno's horizon except in a very wide and loose sense of the word, namely, cleverness or the ability to get the good things. This [kind of] wisdom is very important. It is implied in his understanding of virtue. But if it means to be concerned with understanding for the sake of understanding, this we can safely say: he is wholly uninterested in what virtue is. He is interested only in that practical question: How is virtue regardless of what it is acquired, because this is his personal problem. Today he would have to go to a psychiatrist, but here he has the good luck to meet Socrates. [Laughter]

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[1] Deleted "various…of the."
[2] Deleted "is…."
[3] Deleted "and."
[4] Deleted "place."
[5] Deleted "proves…he."
[6] Deleted "is." Moved "always." Deleted "a good…."
[7] Changed from "An early stage of logic, as you know we might say?"
[8] Deleted "did…."
[9] Deleted "But there is no…."
[10] Deleted "But there is no…."
[11] Deleted "in the *Theologica Summa."*
[12] Deleted "and of the individual definitions."
[13] Deleted "of color…."
[14] Deleted "Let us…Could we perhaps close the door now? That would be very…)."
[15] Deleted "strictly speaking…not."

[16] Deleted "Now what happens…yeah."
[17] Deleted "are through…up."
[18] Deleted "makes…."
[19] Deleted "the…."
[20] Deleted "Second sentence."
[21] Deleted "makes…."
[22] Changed from "Now there are a few other passages in Klein—in the sequel, which I will read because…on page 65, following."
[23] Deleted "He tries to avoid…and."
[24] Deleted "tell him"
[25] Deleted "can't have …you."
[26] Deleted "answer…to."
[27] Deleted "Could he not…."
[28] Deleted "He surely…."
[29] Deleted "other…any."
[30] Deleted "and wave length."
[31] Deleted "—is."
[32] Deleted "is…."
[33] Deleted "read…let us."
[34] Deleted "Let us not…."
[35] Deleted "who."
[36] Deleted "that."
[37] Deleted "take…."
[38] Changed from "But…so, and so Plato accepts that, that Socrates…one needs an initiation into philosophy."
[39] Deleted "you know?"
[40] Deleted "to…."
[41] Deleted "the geometric definition."
[42] Deleted "I would say."
[43] Deleted "is the point…." Moved "is."
[44] Deleted "it."
[45] Deleted "in preparing…."
[46] Deleted "More in the spirit…."
[47] Deleted "very."
[48] Deleted "but that was"
[49] Deleted "among…."
[50] Deleted "Now Socrates no longer asks…."
[51] Deleted "now that can also be."
[52] Deleted "somewhat."
[53] Moved "grabbing."
[54] Deleted "We cannot…let's see what Klein says."
[55] Deleted "neither…."
[56] Deleted "see what…let us."
[57] Deleted "could be."
[58] Deleted "To have…."
[59] Changed from "Well if you take the beautiful things in a rather…think especially of art—culture vulture. Yes, but he is of course broader, wider."
[60] Deleted "he"
[61] Deleted "good things…the."
[62] Changed from "To use a word which is not used, which is even avoided here, because what was translated "ill-starred" is in Greek *kakodaimōn*, the opposite of *eudaimōn*—-*eudaimōn* which is ordinarily translated by "happiness," but happiness with a more…with a somewhat religious overtone."
[63] Deleted "which"
[64] Deleted "more…with a somewhat."
[65] Deleted "is…and that."
[66] Deleted "the."

[67] Deleted “have now…we.”
[68] Deleted “Yes.”
[69] Deleted “to suffer….”
[70] Deleted “admits that…and.”
[71] Deleted “on.”
[72] Deleted “there are people…but.”
[73] Deleted “but.”
[74] Deleted “a.”
[75] Deleted “or.”
[76] Deleted “and that.”
[77] Deleted “who have”
[78] Deleted “that it is a bit more complicated”
[79] Deleted “agree with him that the people who have the evil and are —why does he.”
[80] Deleted “You mean.”
[81] Deleted “…So Meno earlier replies.”
[82] Deleted “says…and.”
[83] Deleted “desire evil.”
[84] Deleted “was very miserable….”
[85] Deleted “if they desire…”
[86] Deleted “it.”
[87] Deleted “And so….”
[88] Deleted “Virtue….”
[89] Deleted “that.”
[90] Deleted “If.”
[91] Deleted “it would….”
[92] Deleted “relevant…is.”
[93] Deleted “is…that is…that.”
[94] Deleted “wonders how to live….”
[95] Deleted “that”

Session 6: April 14, 1966

Leo Strauss: [1]Last time we began to consider Meno's third answer to Socrates's question of what virtue is. He says virtue consists in enjoying, that is to say desiring, the beautiful or fine things and[2] [in] be[ing] able to get them, to lay hold of them. Now we have observed that this answer differs from the two preceding answers by the fact that this is no longer Gorgias's answer but a poet's answer. Socrates has compelled Meno to abandon Gorgias's authority, which is something. And the second point is that he speaks now for the first time of the noble or fine things. This is in agreement with his general view, which we have observed before, that there is no common ground between masters and slaves or between gentlemen and the vulgar. The right kind of people and only they desire the fine things. Good.

Now Socrates induces Meno without any difficulty to accept the simple identification of the noble or fine things with the good things. And then we reached the conclusion that all men desire the good things, whereas not all men desire the noble things; hence virtue does not consist in this desire because everyone, however vicious, has it. But this does not make the desire for the good things unimportant. On the contrary, this desire, this concern common to all men is the *archē*, the true beginning of thinking and philosophy in contradistinction to geometry, for example. In the case of all other pursuits, one can ask: Why should we engage in it? Or, generally stated: Is science good?—this great question which you know cannot be answered even by present-day science. But as regards the good, we cannot help pursuing it, and since very little experience teaches every one of us that not everything we strive for as good is good, we see the necessity of knowing the good. Meno's third answer leads to the conclusion that virtue as the ability to acquire the good, to acquire happiness, presupposes knowledge. Knowledge is at least an indispensable ingredient of virtue, and this is a new thing here in the dialogue.

Now Meno, it is quite true, has a very narrow view of what the good things are. He understands by the good things the acquisition of gold and silver, honor in the city, and ruling offices. But when Socrates reminds him that virtue can of course consist only in the just acquisition of these things, he says at once, as he did in the case of the first two answers: Of course, only just acquisition [counts as virtue].[3] By this quick assent he makes clear to us that he is in the habit of forgetting justice, which is perhaps worse than that he so immediately agrees with Socrates. In the present case, Socrates says virtue consists in justly and *piously* acquiring the good things. Virtue consists in justly and piously acquiring the good things. Socrates had not mentioned piety in the two preceding cases, in the discussion of the first and second answers. Now at this point I think we should begin our reading. Yes?

Student: The introduction of the poet as the source here: as an English major, I sort of think of that as being good, that he's progressed to the poets. Would it have the same connotation to Plato?

LS: No.

Same Student: It would have just the reverse.

LS: No. No. Poets have a very bad press in Plato [laughter], at least at first glance. Well, you know that. They are expelled [from the just city]. So surely that doesn't mean that at all. The only point that is of importance is that it is not Gorgias—and that we can understand, why it is important, because Socrates has rubbed it in all the time, that he is a follower of Gorgias. Now we begin to read at 78d7.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then, according to Meno, who is the hereditary friend of the great king, virtue is the power of getting silver and gold. And would you add that they must be gained piously, justly, or do you deem this to be of no consequence, and is any mode of acquisition, even if unjust and dishonest, equally to be deemed virtue?
> [MEN.] Not virtue, Socrates, but vice.
> [SOC.] Then justice or temperance or holiness or some other part of virtue as would appear must accompany the acquisition and without them the mere acquisition of good will not be virtue.
> [MEN.] Why, how can there be virtue without these? (78d1-e3)[i]

LS: You see, like a very nice British public school boy[4]. But you see that Socrates's statement is a bit ambiguous. He says [that acquiring these goods must be accompanied by] either justice or moderation or piety, or some other part of virtue. One part of virtue is necessary, not necessarily justice or piety or moderation. What could that other part be which could be necessary while these three are not necessary?

Mr. Reinken: Wisdom?

LS: Knowledge, yes. Practical wisdom might do. But of course that is perfectly compatible with the fact that practical wisdom necessarily leads or implies justice and so on. Meno, however,[5] who is much more generous here than Socrates, [says] that all these parts of virtue are required for virtue. The difficulty is quite obvious, the deeper difficulty, namely, that he uses virtue in defining virtue. He says virtue consists in acquiring things virtuously. But this will be brought out later. Now go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:

> And the non-acquisition of gold and silver in a dishonest manner for oneself or another, or in other words, the want of them may be equally virtue.
> [MEN.] True.

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[i] Mr. Reinken reads from Benjamin Jowett's translation (3rd edition revised and corrected, Oxford University Press,1892). Jowett's translation of the *Meno* is available on a number of online sites.

LS: Now Socrates, you see, comes back to justice alone and forgets about the other virtues that he had mentioned before. It doesn't make any difference to Meno, who is not aware of this. Yes, the rest of this passage?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then the acquisition of such goods is no more virtue than the non-acquisition and want of them, but whatever is accompanied by justice or honesty is virtue—

LS: Well, "or honesty" is of [course not in the original]. No, he is really very bad, Jowett. This other man was much better. He is too, how should I say, too generous; you know, he gives many more words to Socrates than Socrates actually uses. All right. Next time you'll bring again the Loeb.

Mr. Reinken. Yes.

LS: Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> and whatever is devoid of justice is vice.
> [MEN.] It cannot be otherwise in my judgment. (78e3-79a2)

LS: Ya. No, "It seems to me necessary, what you say." So the last word here is then that virtue has nothing to do with the acquisition of gold and silver; it consists only in the practice of justice, and Meno agrees, so[6] that [he] is a wonderfully easy man to handle, it seems. He doesn't have very strong convictions in favor of vice. So having reached this point, we have to consider a few passages which we have not considered sufficiently last time.

Now the first point is this. From a certain moment on in 78a, Socrates, when the question[7] concerns our desiring the good things,[8] introduces another term instead of "desiring." In Greek, instead of *epithumein,* he uses[9] *boulesthai*. Now the question is what this means—what this other word, *boulesthai*, means. I think it simply means [that] it is broader; *boulesthai* is broader than desiring. It means wishing. Whenever we desire something we wish it, but the reverse is not true. We may wish something without desiring it. We may wish something which we regard as impossible and therefore we do not truly desire it. You might look up Aristotle's *Ethics* 111b19 to 29. So, good. This was one point I thought I should mention.

And now I come to the question of which I have[10] [been thinking], how do we deduce that Meno is not interested in pleasure? This has to do with the passage 78c3 to d3 where he enumerates the various kinds of good things, and pleasure as pleasure doesn't occur. That isn't my sole basis. You only have to compare that, for example, with Callicles, who opposes Socrates and attacks justice in the *Gorgias*, and where all the emphasis is on pleasure. And the connection can be illustrated by a passage in the *Gorgias* 475a2 to 4, where Polus, the interlocutor, summarizes what Socrates says as follows:

Mr. Reinken: You are defining?

> [Pol.] Quite so. And now at any rate, Socrates, you are defining admirably when you delimit the beautiful by pleasure and by what is good.

LS: In other words, the beautiful or noble or fine [are] equal to pleasure and the good. So there is a close connection between pleasure and the noble and fine, although of course no identity. You could also look up in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, book 1, chapter 9, where this theme is more fully developed. Now I think that is characteristic [of] Meno,[11] [who] is not a pleasure-seeker. Whether this is good or bad is another matter, but he is—you can understand it [in this way]. We use a word today very frequently, especially in political science: power. Now a man who is power-hungry is not necessarily a man who is pleasure-loving. The sign is [that] he may be perfectly satisfied with pulling the wires without anybody [being] aware of it. Now the place which is occupied in Greek discussion by desire for honor and superiority, and which means of course visible honor, visible superiority, is[12] taken now by something which is invisible or may be invisible and lacks the splendor which the former has. This may help perhaps as an illustration of what I am driving at. Good.[13]

Is this sufficient for an answer now? Well, and there is another sign of it which is not sufficient but which is interesting: Meno never laughs. And there is some connection between the pleasure lovers and the lovers of laughter in Plato's mind. That is not sufficient. A man may not laugh and may nevertheless be a pleasure-seeker, that is quite true, but it is[14] produced only as an[other] indication. Now were there any other points? We were now in 78, but before we go on I would like to find out whether there is any other question regarding what preceded so that we have the maximum of clarity we can reasonably expect. If not, then let us go on, 79a3.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] I agree that it must be as you say.
> [SOC.] And were we saying a little while ago that each of these things was a part of virtue—justice and temperance and the rest of them?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And here you are, Meno, making fun of me?
> [MEN.] How so, Socrates?
> [SOC.] Because after my begging you not to break up virtue into small change, and giving you a pattern on which you should answer, you have ignored all this, and now tell me that virtue is the ability to procure good things with justice; and this, you tell me, is a part of virtue?
> [MEN.] I do. (79a1-b3)[ii]

LS: So in other words, justice and virtue consist in procuring the good things with virtue. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

[ii] Mr. Reinken reads from the Loeb edition, translated by W.R.M. Lamb.

> Then it follows from your own admission that doing whatever one does with a part of virtue is itself virtue; for you say that justice is a part of virtue, and so is each of such qualities. You ask the meaning of my remark. It is that after my requesting you to speak of virtue as a whole, you say not a word as to what it is in itself, but tell me that every action is virtue provided that it is done with a part of virtue; as though you had told me what virtue is in the whole, and I must understand it forthwith—when you are really splitting it up into fragments! (79b4-c3)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Now virtue is the ability to acquire the good things with justice, i.e., with a part of virtue. Virtue means something different, we can perhaps say in the two cases, but the common ingredient is surely not brought out, and it must be; otherwise you would not use the same term. Socrates wants to know virtue as a whole and, as he also says, virtue itself. In other words, that comprehensive thing is not merely a general concept but it is virtue itself. Can we understand that, that the comprehensive thing, that general thing, that universal thing is virtue itself? I'll give you an indication which is not quite fitting, but it is of some help. In Thucydides's history[15] he speaks occasionally of a place of military importance and calls it the place itself. And it is later on called by one of his characters the nature of the place, meaning as the place is without any human fortifications, and so on. The place itself is the nature of the place; virtue itself is the nature of virtue. And this nature is that which[16] constitutes the class of all virtues. The nature of a thing belonging to a class is the class character, the character common to all members of the class. The class character constitutes everything belonging to a class. It constitutes all things belonging to the class: it is one and the whole. And the difficulty is that the class as a whole, say, the class of dogs, is only a part of *the* whole, so that the part-whole relation which occurs within the class comes [in] again in the relation of the class to the whole assembly. Yes. We can, I think, leave it at that now and read the end of this exchange.

Mr. Reinken:

> I think therefore that you must face the same question all over again, my dear Meno—What is virtue?—if we are to be told that every action accompanied by a part of virtue is virtue; for that is the meaning of the statement that every action accompanied by justice is virtue. Or do you not agree that you have to meet the same question afresh? Do you suppose that anyone can know a part of virtue when he does not know virtue itself?
> [MEN.] No, I do not. (79c3-10)

LS: You remember this was the difficulty at the beginning, where Socrates said very simplistically: How can I answer your question how virtue can be acquired if I do not know in the first place what virtue is? Now that is in a way still truer if you, say, are concerned with a part of virtue and you do not know virtue itself. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And I daresay you remember, when I answered you a while ago about figure, how we rejected the sort of answer that attempts to proceed in terms which are still under inquiry and has not yet been admitted.
> [MEN.] Yes, and we were right in rejecting it, Socrates.
> [SOC.] Well, then, my good sir, you must not in your turn suppose that while the nature of virtue as a whole is still under inquiry you will explain it to anyone by replying in terms of its parts, or by any other statement on the same lines: you will only have to face the same question over again—What *is* this virtue, of which you are speaking all the time? Or do you see no force in what I say?
> [MEN.] I think what you say is right. (79d1-e4)

LS: Do you see a difficulty here in this passage? Superficially it seems to make sense. How can you define something by recurring to something unknown? Did we not have this difficulty before? In which case?

Student: Color.

LS: Figure and color. And what was the answer given by Socrates at that time?

Student: Common sense: you know what color is.

LS: Ya. Well, he didn't say this explicitly, but he obliged Meno by giving another definition. But at that time, he did not identify himself with Meno's request, but now he identifies himself with Meno's request for such a kind of definition. Now Meno has now made, at any rate, truly the same mistake of which he had falsely accused Socrates. Not only has he failed to answer Socrates's question and exhausted his arsenal of apparent answers, he stands now convicted by the very law which he himself had invoked: one must not have recourse to something unknown. Now for the understanding of this passage, we need (at least I need) Klein's commentary. But[17] there are a few points which we can read before. On page 81—I can read it, that is perhaps faster—81, the third paragraph.

> Meno's second attempt to "define" human excellence, an attempt already repudiated by him, is thus made to appear to have floundered as the first had done; now as then a multiplicity has been reached where something "one and whole" was expected to be found. We remember: the pattern was set from the very beginning, when Meno presented Socrates with a "swarm" of virtues. In this respect, too, Meno—not without Socrates' help—indulges in repeating himself.

In other words, just as he repeats Gorgias's sayings, he repeats his own mistakes. I will read a little bit later on, page 82.

> Socrates reminds Meno that, when they were considering the question of *schēma*, [figure—LS][iii] the attempt was made to give an answer in terms of things still

[iii] Klein gives only the Greek: (*schēma*).

> sought, that is, still "unknown," and not yet agreed upon.[iv] "We rejected this kind of answer, didn't we?" says Socrates, an obvious misrepresentation of what had happened then. Meno's memory seems to fail him: he does not make any attempt to correct the record. On the contrary, he says: "And rightly indeed, Socrates, did we reject that kind of answer." *We* shall have to put the record straight.
>
> Shielded by Meno's acquiescence, Socrates, winding up this phase of the discussion, exhorts Meno to avoid falling into the same trap. While the *whole* of human excellence is still being sought,[v] he should not venture to reveal to anyone what it is by referring to its "parts," nor should he use such a device in any other case. Socrates repeats, Meno ought to face once more[vi] the question: "In all that you say, what do you imply that human excellence is?" And to ascertain Meno's (and our) reaction to this kind of criticism, [Socrates] adds: "Or do I seem to you to say nothing?" Meno: "It seems to me that what you say is right." Let us consider whether it is.
>
> It was Meno who objected to Socrates' introducing something "unknown" into the "definition" of [figure][vii]. Socrates stuck to his statement and maintained its truth. In accordance with a rule that should be observed in a serious and friendly conversation, Socrates was willing, however, to provide Meno with a "definition" that suited the latter's wishes. This definition was patterned on the procedure of "synthetic" mathematics which avoids "unknown" terms, but it was by no means certain that this procedure and the kind of [agreement][viii] demanded and realized in it were suited to the task at hand [meaning to understand the[18] standing of virtue, a non-mathematical subject—LS]. In no sense did Socrates agree with Meno on rejecting as totally unsuitable answers containing "unknown terms."[ix]

Now this is now developed by Klein in the sequel in the next four pages, from which we shall have to read quite a [large] part.[19] As a general introduction to that, I suggest the following consideration. Let us return to an observation with which we started: Socrates's irony. Socrates's irony we can say consists in his pretending not to know while he knows, and therefore he is regarded as a kind of rascal by people who don't like him. But the question is: Is Socrates's assertion that he doesn't know mere pretense? Does Socrates possess the truth, i.e., the whole truth? Is he not rather a seeker for the truth, and is the great fame which he enjoys up to the present time not connected with the fact that he is the seeker? Yes. Now if we want to use a Greek word in its original meaning, he is a skeptic, because skeptic does not mean a doubter originally but means a man who looks at things. Occasionally in a dialogue someone raises an objection to Socrates and Socrates says: Well, there is nothing like having another look at it; let us look at it together.

[iv] Klein gives the Greek: (*dia tōn eti zētoumenōn kai mēpō hōmologēmenōn*).
[v] Klein gives the Greek: (*eti zētoumenēs aretēs holēs ho ti estin*).
[vi] Klein gives the Greek: (*palin*).
[vii] Klein gives only the Greek: (*schēma*).
[viii] Klein gives only the Greek: (*homologia)*.
[ix] Klein, 82-83.

Now the traditional meaning of skeptic as a man who denies the possibility of knowledge, or a doubter, is to be understood in contradistinction to its opposite, the dogmatist. And this was a common distinction in late antiquity between the dogmatists, people who made assertions, who answered the fundamental questions (like Aristotle, for example), and the skeptics, who denied the possibility of that. Now where does Socrates or Plato stand, compared in the light of this distinction? First, an external fact: Plato founded the Academy; we can[20] [call it] a school. Now this school was for some generations dogmatic, but then it became a school of skepticism. The Academic Skeptics, of whom we know quite a bit through Cicero, who went to that school, show that very clearly. So this external fact, that the Platonic school was not simply dogmatic or was rather alternately dogmatic and skeptic, throws back some light on Plato himself.

Now let us make a big jump to the beginning of modern times: Descartes. Descartes, as you all know, begins his enterprise with skepticism, and with a very extreme skepticism but not with a skeptical intent. He believes that only on the basis of the extreme skepticism can one find a basis which is immune to all doubt. Only an extreme skepticism can make possible the true dogmatic philosophy. So this is something new, then: dogmatism based on skepticism. What Descartes began is not sufficiently described as a new kind of philosophy. It is at the same time the beginning of modern science, because both things are still the same in Descartes. Now when we look at modern science as we know it now, we must say [that] it also cannot easily be subsumed under the heading [of] either dogmatism or skepticism—not under dogmatism because science emphasizes the fact that all its assertions are subject to revision, nor skeptical because it supplies knowledge or claims to supply knowledge. Now this thing shows that there is some kind of kinship between Socrates and Plato with modern science. That is a very superficial argument which I proposed, but we will hear from Klein in the next few pages a more precise (although of course not sufficient) elucidation of this strange connection between modern science and Plato. Now, so I made these remarks so that you are not repelled by the somewhat technical character of the argument. And now, Mr. Reinken, will you read the third paragraph on page 83?

Mr. Reinken:

> The language Socrates uses in exhorting Meno to avoid answering in terms of "things still sought and not yet agreed upon"[x] has nevertheless a familiar "mathematical" ring, hinting at a mathematical procedure which is *not* "synthetic."

LS: Now "synthetic" (that has become clear from earlier remarks) is a procedure which you know from Euclid. You demonstrate by starting from agreed upon premises and go down. But there is also another kind of mathematics which was called analytic, of which he will speak now.

Mr. Reinken:

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[x] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (79d3-6)

> The unknown and the given[xi] are indeed terms used to described the "analytical" method in mathematics. They correspond to the modern terms: the "unknown" and the "given." The definition of mathematical analysis, formulated in antiquity, can be paraphrased as followed: analysis is the method by which what is sought, ("the unknown"),[xii] is taken as something agreed upon, as a given[xiii] (as if it were "given"), and then followed upon through necessary consecutive steps until something previously agreed upon as true (something "given") is reached. It is also the method of setting up an "equation," a method named by Vieta[xiv]—in agreement with the terminology of Greek mathematicians—the " analytical art" and considered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in accordance with an ancient tradition, as constituting the Mathesis universalis[xv], the "universal science." All mathematics today is an outgrowth of this tradition. As far as geometrical considerations are concerned, there is enough evidence for the use of this method in ancient times, even in Plato's own time.[xvi]

LS: Well, you know at least the term "analytical geometry," which is a reminder of that. So Socrates speaks in terms of analytical mathematics, of that kind of mathematics which explicitly uses unknowns, of course in the intention of making them knowns. But it operates with unknowns. Good. That's the first point. Now let us read the next, which is much more important.

Mr. Reinken:

> Ancient writers have credited Plato himself, somewhat vaguely, with introducing—through Leodamas of Thasos—the analytical method into mathematics. It is unlikely that they are right. But it is possible to understand what in Plato's work gave rise to that claim. In a Platonic dialogue, and the *Meno* is no exception, that which is being investigated, the unknown[xvii] (be it excellence, piety, courage, prudence, or justice), is considered from the point of view of various and varying opinions, genuinely or tentatively or perfunctorily held by those who participate in the conversation. To hold an opinion about that which is under consideration means to take—or, at worst, to pretend to take—the "unknown,"[xviii] as if it were "known." To test an opinion means to follow it up through necessary consequences until a patent absurdity (a "contradiction") or something incontrovertibly true comes into sight. Depending on whether the former or the latter happens, the opinion is either refuted or vindicated. To vindicate (or verify) an opinion means to transform an unknown into a given[xix],

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[xi] Klein gives only the Greek, here and throughout the section: *to zētoumenon* and *to homologoumenon.*
[xii] Cf. note viii
[xiii] Cf. note viii.
[xiv] Klein gives the year: (in 1591).
[xv] Klein does not italicize this Latin phrase.
[xvi] Klein, 83.
[xvii] Cf. note viii.
[xviii] Cf. note viii.
[xix] Cf. note viii.

> into something one has to agree to, to transform the hitherto "unknown" into a truth now indeed "known." However seldom, if ever, such vindicating occurs in a Platonic dialogue, the "dialectical" process, which is "analytical" in its very conception and structure, tends toward that end.

LS: So in other words, the extraordinary thing is this: that the dialectics going on in the Platonic dialogues has a kinship with the analytical procedure in mathematics, moving through unknowns in order to make it known, and different from the procedure of the demonstrative mathematics, the synthetic mathematics.[21] In the next paragraph, Klein speaks of this dialectical or analytical procedure and illustrates it by some passages from [an]other Platonic dialogue. We cannot read that. But let us read[22] the top of page 86.

Mr. Reinken:

> There are subjects, on the other hand, which, independently of the opinions we have about them, seem to be "divided" in themselves and thus present a peculiar difficulty. It might be helpful to consider a passage in the *Sophist* which is not unrelated to this difficulty as well as to the problem Socrates and Meno are directly concerned with.
>
> Knowledge, it is said in the *Sophist*,[xx] although one would suppose that it is "one"[xxi] in itself, appears to be "fractioned,"[xxii] and each of its separate "parts" has a name of its own. That is why we speak of the many "arts" and "sciences."[xxiii]

LS: Ya, let us stop here.[23] So what Klein had spoken of before is this: our opinions about things consist of parts, and therefore the problem of [ascending from the] parts [to the] whole [arises, since] the parts are known, while the whole is not known. That is the difficulty[24] [that] comes here to sight. Now not only our opinions about things have this character, but also the things themselves: the sciences, for instance. Someone may very well know what mineralogy is but might be driven into difficulty if he were to say what science as such is. Easy. Now the same of course applies to virtue. Someone can perhaps say with reasonable clarity what the difference between justice and temperance is and to that extent know what justice and temperance[25] [are], and would be hard put if he were asked what virtue as virtue is.

The difficulty fundamentally stated [is] as follows: philosophy as it is understood by Plato (as well as by Aristotle[26] and by a quite a few others) [is] the attempt to know the whole, which does not of course mean to know everything occurring in the whole, like what Mr. X whispered in Miss Y's ears. This is only idle curiosity and has nothing to do with philosophy or science.[27] Philosophy tries to know the whole, and to know the whole means to know its parts, let us say its essential parts in their essential character. One cannot know the whole without knowing its parts, and vice versa, we cannot know a part if we do not know the whole because that is a superficial knowledge; we do not see the

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[xx] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (257c7-d3)
[xxi] Klein gives the Greek: (*mia*).
[xxii] Klein gives the Greek: (*phainetai katakekermatisthai*).
[xxiii] Klein, 86.

connections which it has [with other things]. In fact, however, we know only parts, i.e., we have only partial knowledge of the parts because we do not know sufficiently the whole to which they belong. Now this we may call opinions, partial knowledge, not to say half-truth. We are capable only of striving for knowledge of the whole, of *philosophy*, not of *sophia*, wisdom.[28] That is the Platonic view. Then how come [29]Socrates is not simply a skeptic? How does he know that philosophizing and all its implications are good? This is the question which we must try to solve. One can state very simply what Klein [and I] ha[ve] been trying to sketch: The truth is elusive, and this elusiveness of truth can in no way be [30][overcome]. And yet the very insight into the elusiveness of the truth is in a strange way the proof of the necessity of philosophy. Let us leave it at this point here, because we have no sufficient basis yet for asserting anything beyond that.

Now the main point here as regards the text is then that Socrates misrepresents what has happened before in the conversation with Meno, and Meno is quite satisfied with that misinterpretation. He doesn't even see that it's a misinterpretation, because that is up his alley. That is what he says all the time: You can't define by unknowns. And Socrates accepts this, as we said, for the time being. Yes.[31] Everything is now settled. Meno doesn't know what virtue is and now [he must try to] answer again. Please read.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Then answer me again from the beginning: what do both you and your companion say that virtue is?

LS: Yes. Now in other words, Socrates comes back to the suggestion that Meno would of course only give a Gorgian answer. But, as we shall see from the sequel, Gorgias's and Meno's arsenals are exhausted. Now Socrates calls Gorgias[32] Meno's companion or comrade. The key point is that he does not wish anymore to mention Gorgias's name, thus[33] hinting at the fact that something has happened to Gorgias, namely, Gorgias was dropped by Meno himself. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Socrates, I used to be told, before I began to meet you, that yours was just a case of being in doubt yourself and making others doubt also; and so now I find you are merely bewitching me with your spells and incantations, which have reduced me to utter perplexity. (79e5-80a4)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Now Meno has been reduced to *aporia*. "Doubt" is not a sufficiently good translation of that word. *Aporia* is the defect of *poros*, of wealth, of wealth in every sense of the word—of easy ways out. An *aporia* is the absence of a way out, and it is therefore also poverty, an embarrassment. He has been reduced to that state, that is to say to the same condition in which Socrates himself notoriously finds himself. You remember when he said: I don't know; I am a poor man—as he said at the beginning—not like you rich Thessalians who have now the answers to all questions, since Gorgias lived with[34] [you].[35] This has some importance here, this remark. Socrates is notorious for his lack of ways out, for his inability to answer questions. Why then did Meno address Socrates with his question, since he knew in advance that Socrates could

not answer it?[36] Again, the initial question becomes an ever-greater riddle the more we learn about Meno. Yes.[37] And what Meno says to Socrates here: You did it again. You do this to everyone. [Laughter] Namely, it is your fault that I am embarrassed. I have never been embarrassed before, and this cannot be due to any fair art; it can only be due to something very foul, like witchcraft, which you obviously use. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] And if I am indeed to have my jest, I consider that both in your appearance and in other respects you are extremely like the flat torpedo sea-fish; for it benumbs anyone who approaches and touches it, and something of the sort is what I find you have done to me now.

LS: Meno, of course, being a man who can take care of himself, punishes Socrates by comparing his looks and his conduct to a certain ugly beast. [Laughter] Socrates was notorious for his ugliness, yet he is nevertheless well-mannered, you see. He only mocks, and he apologizes even for mocking: If I may make a joke at your expense. But the point is that in fact Meno is quite serious. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> For in truth I feel my soul and my tongue quite benumbed, and I am at a loss what answer to give you. And yet on countless occasions I have made abundant—

LS: Ya, "ten thousands of times." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> abundant speeches on virtue to various people—and very good speeches they were, so I thought—but now I cannot say one word as to what it is. You are well advised, I consider, in not voyaging or taking a trip away from home; for if you went on like this as stranger in any other city you would very likely be taken up for a wizard. (80a4-b7)

LS: Yes. Now so Meno has[38] [had] an experience which he has never[39] [had] before and [he] surely . . . So that makes still more dubious, more questionable, more enigmatic why[40] he approach[ed] Socrates in the first place. I repeat that again and again. He adds now a point which shows that he is serious in spite of this seeming joke. Socrates's activity is not a joking matter. He can do [41]th[ese] kind[s] of things in Athens and only in Athens, with its notorious freedom or license where everyone can do what he likes. It is, in other words, a veiled threat: Don't dare to come to Thessaly, for example, where I have a say. And this points to the fact, which some of you will know, that later on in this dialogue, Anytus, Socrates's accuser, will come in. So the whole fate of Socrates is foreshadowed in this remark of Meno. But Meno cannot be supposed to be a good diviner, because he cannot possibly believe that anything can happen to Socrates in Athens; only outside of Athens could it happen to him. Good. It cannot happen here. [Laughter] Yes, something of this kind is happening here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] You are a rogue, Meno, and had almost deceived me.
> [MEN.] How is that—

LS: No, "rogue" is too strong. "You joked." *Paizein*, "you joked toward."

Mr. Reinken: I was wondering how *panourgos* is translated.

LS: Oh, I'm sorry, am I on the wrong page? Ya, I'm very sorry. It's "rogue," ya, even a very strong word. I'm sorry. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] You are a rogue, Meno, and had almost deceived me.
> [MEN.] How is that, Socrates?
> [SOC.] I perceive your aim in thus comparing me.
> [MEN.] What was it?
> [SOC.] That I might compare you in return. One thing I know about all handsome people is this—they delight in being compared to something. They do well over it, since fine features, I suppose, must have fine similes. But I am not for playing your game. (80b8-c6)

LS: Socrates pretends, obviously, that he has not noticed the fist in Meno's kid glove. Meno is surprised by Socrates's fearlessness. Now the point which Socrates makes is that handsome or beautiful people enjoy being likened, for it is useful to them since their likenesses too benefit them. They amplify their beauty, not only here where this handsome man stands, but also there and there, wherever his likeness or picture might be. An ugly man like Socrates, [an] admittedly ugly man, does not like to be likened, obviously. Good. Now let us see the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> As for me, if the torpedo is torpid itself while causing others to be torpid, I am like it, but not otherwise. For it not from any sureness in myself that I cause others to doubt: it is from being in more doubt than anyone else that I cause doubt in others. So now, for my part, I have no idea what virtue is, whilst you, though perhaps you may have known before you came in touch with me, are now as good as ignorant of it also.

LS: Ya, let us stop there. Socrates takes exception to Meno's likening of him. But he tacitly adds that what people say about him is true. This is implied. Socrates makes them embarrassed, lacking in ways out; that Socrates does not deny. Yes? And now the next sentence only.

Mr. Reinken: But, nonetheless—

LS: But one thing is wrong—Socrates emphasizes: I know nothing. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] But none the less I am willing to join you in examining it and inquiring into its nature. (80c6-d4)

LS: "Together with you." Now Socrates and Meno are now in the same boat. They must seek together, whereas hitherto the situation was always this, that Socrates knew nothing and Meno had the answers. Now they have reached a common ground. So in other words, only now can a common investigation start; hitherto there was no possibility of such a community. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Why, on what lines will you look, Socrates, for a thing of whose nature you know nothing at all? Pray, what sort of thing, amongst those that you know not, will you treat us to as the object of your search? Or even supposing, at the best, that you hit upon it, how will you know it is the thing you did not know?

LS: Yes, that was a famous sophistical or eristic argument: How can you seek for something of which you do not have the slightest knowledge? Does it not make sense? I mean, how can you seek a gold coin if you don't know what a gold coin is? How can you seek for virtue if you do not have the slightest notion of what virtue is? Yes. What does Socrates say to that?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I understand the point you would make, Meno. Do you see what a captious argument you are introducing—that, forsooth, a man cannot inquire either about what he knows or about what he does not know? For he cannot inquire about what he knows, because he knows it, and in that case is in no need of inquiry; nor again can he inquire about what he does not know, since he does not know about what he is to inquire. (80d5-e5)

LS: The translation is not in every point good. In other words, the argument is here more precise. Inquiry is impossible because either you know the thing to be inquired into: no need for inquiry; or you do not know it: no possibility of inquiry. Socrates is, in other words, in no way taken aback by Meno's point because that is a very well-known argument. Meno again remembers something which he has heard, and Socrates renders this speech, this *logos*, more precise. Meno had said that if you do not know a thing you can never find it; Socrates says if you do not know it you cannot seek[42] it. Now this *argos logos*, as it is called—the lazy *logos*, the *logos* justifying[43] intellectual laziness—is that *logos* on which Meno has acted all the time. The deed of Meno, the acting on the lazy *logos*, precedes the explicit statement of the lazy *logos*, as Klein develops very well on page 91 following. Meno does not believe in the possibility of learning. This we did not yet know. But does he not believe in geometry and hence in the possibility of learning? Because he obviously believes in that; he takes this for granted. But perhaps he is uncertain[44] whether there is true learning even in geometry, and hence in particular whether virtue can be acquired by learning. And this question regarding whether[45] virtue can be acquired by learning, this aspect of the question of learning is of course most important to him. Geometry is not terribly important to Meno.

Now this uncertainty regarding virtue, whether virtue can be acquired by learning, may be of concern to him, for he may be concerned with possessing virtue and not only wealth and power. I mean, what he understands by virtue we must leave open; we have some inklings of what he understands by it, but still in this sense he is concerned with virtue. I mean, he wants to be regarded as an *hombre* of a certain kind, perhaps[46] not strictly speaking within the law, that we do not know, but still he may be concerned with[47] honor. He is concerned, as we have seen, with being regarded as superior, for he knows (if only by looking at Socrates) that there are people who are not impressed by wealth and power as such. He wishes to make sure that the qualities which he possesses are admirable, that they are virtuous. Meno is sure to possess virtue, but he could not possess it if virtue were acquired with the help of learning, for he doesn't like the effort. He never made the effort; he only remembered. Virtue could not be acquired by learning or knowledge if learning were impossible, but Meno is not certain that it is impossible; hence his initial question.[48]

Let us try to restate it again. Meno[49] is not merely approaching Socrates in order to be able to tell in Thessaly and other places: Well, I know what Socrates has said about these matters, but he has a genuine concern—not a very noble one, but a genuine one, and that is to make sure that he possesses virtue. He knows very well that he does not possess knowledge or learning; he regards it as impossible. But if learning should be required for getting virtue then his virtue would be questionable, and therefore he wants to appease this doubt. This is I think behind all his motions. We later on, I believe, will find some proof of it.

Meno wishes to possess virtue without effort. He wishes that virtue be acquired neither by learning nor by training. He wishes to possess it by nature, from the moment of his birth. He is and regards himself as a man who is a master by nature, not having learned or practiced something but being what he is. Socrates is certain that learning is possible and indispensable for virtue and happiness, and therefore one should think he will induce Meno to become concerned with learning, with learning something. From an earlier reference of Meno in 74a5, we know that he regards wisdom as a virtue. But this doesn't necessarily mean that he regards wisdom as something that can be learned, because some people are by nature clever and do not need any special learning to act cleverly in their lives. So Meno, to repeat, has now revealed what one can say [is] the theoretical premise of his whole life: learning is impossible, and his whole conduct and conversation with Socrates is elucidated by this principle. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Now does it seem to you to be a good argument, Socrates?
> [SOC.] It does not.
> [MEN.] Can you explain how not?
> [SOC.] I can; for I have heard from wise men and women who told of things divine that—
> [MEN.] What was it they said?

LS: Now wait here.[50] Now you see Socrates disapproves of that, [Meno's argument], and he has another *logos* contrary to the lazy *logos*. But [51]just as Meno's *logos* stems from some sophist, Socrates has also a *logos* which stems from some people. Socrates too falls back on his memory, on his tradition, which is very different from the tradition on which Meno relies. In the dialogue *Protagoras* we find a beautiful confrontation of the traditions behind Socrates on the one hand, and [those] behind Protagoras on the other hand. Behind Protagoras is a whole list of celebrities from Homer on up to some gymnastic teacher somewhere in Sicily at that time,[xxiv] whereas Socrates's tradition[52] [is derived] only [from] the notoriously inarticulate Spartans.[xxv] What that means is a long question, but at any rate Socrates is concerned with making clear that he relies on a different tradition than the one on which Protagoras relies. Socrates's tradition includes also women, as you see, and we have some other evidence for that, that Socrates liked to tell stories told by a certain kind of woman. You remember the *Banquet*: Diotima, who also is a woman[53] [and who shares] the same concern with the divine things as the women and men of whom he speaks here. There would surely be no place for women in the tradition behind the manly Meno. Socrates's tradition is concerned with the divine things, as you see here, and [54]and connected with that is his hesitation: For I have heard from[55] men and women wise about the divine things. And then he stops, obviously, because Meno asks him: What do they say? Socrates reflects[56] [and] is hesitant to speak. Perhaps there is a need for reverent silence, and Meno of course is impatient because that is a vital question for him: Is learning possible or not? If it is possible, it may be necessary for acquiring virtue and that would become a serious question for him because he wants to be virtuous. Good. Now the next point, the next brief exchange.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] What was it they said?
> [SOC.] Something true, as I thought, and admirable.

LS: Ya, "true and noble." Something may be noble but not true.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] "What was it? And who were the speakers?" (81a1-9)

LS: Yes. You see Socrates still hesitates to reveal that *logos,* let us call [it] the non-lazy *logos*. He only says that it is true and noble. Not everything true is noble and not everything noble is true. There are noble lies. Meno wishes now to hear not only the *logos* but also those who tell it. Perhaps he distrusts speeches which are introduced in the manner in which Socrates introduces his *logos*: I would like to know what kind of fellows they are who say this kind of thing. And then the question might be settled in the negative by just hearing these names. That is a possible explanation. Now?

Mr. Reinken:

[xxiv] *Protagoras* 316d6ff.
[xxv] *Protagoras* 342a9ff.

> [SOC.] They were certain priests and priestesses who have studied so as to be able to give a reasoned account of their ministry; and Pindar also and many another poet of heavenly gifts. As to their words, they are these—

LS: Many of the poets—how did he say [it]?

Mr. Reinken: "Of heavenly gifts."

LS: Ya, "All who are divine," let us translate it. All the divine poets—not all poets are divine. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> As to their words, they are these: mark now, if you judge them to be true.

LS: Now let us stop here first. The priestly origin vouches for the nobility of the *logos*, but its truth must be examined. And now he begins to say the *logos*. What is that *logos*?

Mr. Reinken:

> They say that the soul of man is immortal, and at one time comes to an end, which is called dying, and at another is born again, but never perishes. Consequently one ought to live all one's life in the utmost holiness.
>
> > For from whomsoever Persephone shall accept requital for ancient wrong, the souls of these she restores in the ninth year to the upper sun again; from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.
>
> Seeing then that the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything; so that it is no wonder that she should be able to recollect all that she knew before about virtue and other things. For as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no reason why we should not, by remembering but one single thing—an act which men call learning—discover everything else, if we have courage and faint not in the search; since, it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection. (81a10-d5)

LS: Ya, let us stop here.[57] So then the story, the counterstory, which is meant to prove that learning is possible: the starting point is [that] the soul is immortal, and[58] the first consequence from this is that one must live as piously as possible, which would include, I suppose, also to live as justly and as moderately as possible. Such a pious life is[59] a necessary condition for forgiveness of ancient sin, but it is not the sufficient condition for that. That depends on the act of Persephone, the wife of Pluto. If the sin is forgiven, which depends on Persephone's grace, one returns to life after a relatively short time. If not—that is not spelled out, we have to figure that out for oneself—one will stay in Hades or become embodied in a beast if there is such transmigration.[60] In the more

desirable case, one will return to life after a short time, and one may become an *anēr*, an *hombre*, of outstanding strength and wisdom. Meno, then, if this story is correct, cannot reach his goal in his present life. That's out of the question. He has to live through this life as piously as he can so that maybe after his reincarnation he can get what he desires to such a degree, but only if he lives in the present life most piously. Virtue is then acquired by piety plus divine grace, in contradistinction to learning. There is nothing said about learning.

This is the old story which Socrates repeats and which he puts to a somewhat different use. The soul is immortal; hence it has often been born. But why only often, many times? Why not infinitely many times, if it is strictly speaking immortal? Well, it is not eternal as far as the past is concerned. That is the simplest[61] explanation. It has an origin, and we will later on see something about how the soul becomes the soul. It has seen everything here and in Hades, so it has seen all things. It enters each life with a memory of all things, of what it has seen prenatally. Since all things hang together, the soul can recollect all things by remembering single things. Some things Meno recollects; hence there should be no difficulty in respect to the others. Since all souls are immortal, each can learn. That is the conclusion. All must live piously according to the first part of the argument; in the sequel, however, the emphasis is altogether on the possibility of learning in contradistinction to the necessity of leading a pious life. One can explain this as being due to being said with a view to Meno, who might be won over to learning if he sees that it is to his crude interest, but never to piety. That is a possible explanation. Yes. I think we leave it now at this.

Now this story of learning, the point which he makes here—we must read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken: "So we must not hearken—"

LS: Let us repeat that: seeking and learning is recollection.[xxvi]

Mr. Reinken: Recollection—oh.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> So we must not hearken to that captious argument: it would make us idle, is pleasing only to the indolent ear, whereas the other makes us energetic and inquiring. Putting my trust in its truth, I am ready to inquire with you into the nature of virtue. (81d5-e2)

LS: Ya, or more simply, "to seek with you what virtue is." Now Socrates had opposed this captious *logos*, the *eristikos logos*[62], [with] what we may call a holy *logos*. He does not prove the truth of the holy *logos*, but there is no doubt in Socrates's mind that it is

[xxvi] Mr. Reinken uncharacteristically ignores, or perhaps misunderstands, Strauss's request and does not repeat the previous sentence.

superior to the eristic *logos* because it makes us better. It makes us industrious and inquiring, whereas the opposite *logos* would make us lazy. This has an obvious implication. May I ask what that obvious implication is? That Socrates knows what virtue is. [He knows] that laziness is a vice and industriousness is [a] virtu[e],[63] and Meno,[64] [needless to say], doesn't make any observation regarding that point. Softness is a defect, a vice. Meno would have no doubt about that regarding softness; he doesn't want to be a softie. But that one could also be a softie by refusing to learn, that he has perhaps never considered. Now someone raised his hand—yes?

Student: Is there any indication from the speech itself to what extent it is a myth and to what extent Socrates thinks it true?

LS: I'm sorry, I cannot—

Same Student: What indication is there in the speech itself that parts of it are strictly myth and parts of it are true?

LS: Nothing. Nothing.

Same Student: I mean, because judging by the remark: Something true, as I thought, and noble—

LS: You are absolutely right that one has to take this very seriously. Plato doesn't make a distinction here: this is myth, and this is truth.[65] You have to [make such a distinction] at your own peril. What one can say is only this: there are two conclusions drawn from this story: a) one must live as piously as possible in order perhaps to become an outstanding man in an afterlife; and [b)] the other conclusion is [that] one has to engage in a life of inquiry or examination. Now there is nothing said about the consequences which this would have for a next life, and this is a fact which cannot be denied. What the relation [is] between these two practical consequences is a very long question. It is identical with the question of what is virtue, is it not? I mean, if virtue is knowledge and knowledge in the full sense [66][is not] available, quest for knowledge, then obviously virtue, the human virtue can only consist in seeking knowledge. But in the other case, the emphasis is not on seeking knowledge, and in the first case there is no thought of a reward or punishment after death; [67][whereas] in the first case it obviously is. The alternative is quite clear. Whether one can call any passage in Plato a myth merely because you think it is a myth, or we today think it is a myth, is not sufficient. One has to give an argument for that. Yes?

Student: You just said something [to the effect that] Socrates would think this a better speech because it would improve Meno. What indication is there, or is there any indication that the reason he is making it is in order to improve Meno? Or is it perhaps that he's just stating what he thinks to be true?

LS: Well, he doesn't speak here of Meno in particular. He says it would make us, say, human beings in general, [better]. But Meno may be one of the not-too-rare exceptions.

Ya? This is left open. And that depends on a more general question. Socrates had this famous thing which he called the daimonic thing.[68] It is very hard to find out precisely what[69] [it] is. But it surely includes a gift of divination and especially regarding human beings, to whom he talks. Now Socrates may have seen through Meno a long time ago, whereas we may have to wait to the end in order to do that. And therefore he may, in other words, know quite well that the case of Meno is hopeless, and he engages in this conversation and continues it only because there are perhaps some other people standing around who may benefit from the conversation. To say nothing of ordinary politeness[70]; even when you talk to a dubious individual you cannot simply say: Well, I don't want to talk to you. And [you] have to go on. The maximum Socrates does occasionally, in the *Protagoras*, [for example], after hours and hours of conversation, after Protagoras, the oldest man present, [says]: I have now to put an end to this conversation, and Socrates says, untruthfully: I have also some urgent business. But as can be proven very simply, he didn't have any business. Yes?

Student: I want to make sure I understood you correctly. Did you say [or] mean to say that there was a connection between the question of the relationship between the two conclusions, i.e., that you have to live as piously as possible and you have to engage in a life of inquiry, and ultimately the question of what is virtue?

LS: Yes. Well, I would say: Is it not a necessary question? You have here a story told and two conclusions follow from it which are at least not verbally identical: live as piously as possible; and study, examine. And then is it not necessary to inquire into the relation between these two things? And I said on the basis of some experience (but which can very well be questioned) that this is in the question of virtue itself; there may be perhaps alternatives but each includes much more than it seems to say at first glance. Good. Yes?

Student: What we were just saying brings to mind a question about something earlier. Is it really impossible to know a part without knowing the whole? Can't you know, for instance, that, say, somebody's about to be run over by a car and you save him, that that is a virtuous act even though you might not know what virtue is?

LS: Ya. Otherwise we couldn't possibly live. But still there is something awkward. For example, if you would talk to a clever fellow who is good at arguing, he simply would say: Why do you do that? And I suppose the answer which you would give first and not only first would not satisfy you completely. You have to dig deeper and deeper. But one can say the riddle of Socrates is this: that in a way he truly doesn't have the answers and yet he does have the answer to the question of how to live. So there must be a special status of this kind of question. Now if we could argue, say, from the basis of Kant, it would be very easy: there is a practical reason which has a principle of its own, and you can know the moral law very well without having any theoretical knowledge whatever. I mean, you have to know that there are things, but not any theoretical knowledge proper. And this goes back of course to an older tradition: the moral law, the natural law; these are very old terms. Conscience, a very old term. But these terms do not occur in Plato; they are all post-Platonic and even post-Aristotelian. In Aristotle, it is a very difficult question of what the cognitive status of what we call moral principle is. In Plato, one

must always underline that: the simple term moral virtue—[a] key term in Aristotle—never occurs in Plato or in Socrates. Now this may of course be simply a defect. You know: Plato in an early stage; he has seen a lot for his time but you mustn't expect too much. But this is perhaps a bit too patronizing and impractical for this very reason. And therefore one has to go into [the] reason, how [it was that] [71]Aristotle coined that term moral virtue, which Plato or Socrates might also have coined, and one can give a reason for that: Plato did not wish to admit that there is a virtue in the serious sense of the term which is separable from knowledge in the way in which moral virtue is separable from knowledge, because the kind of knowledge which you need for moral acting is not very much. Morally acting is not very much, generally speaking, as Aristotle himself says. So what was the question from which you started?

Same Student: That at one point it seemed that Socrates was saying—boxing Meno by saying: Well, we can't proceed this way because how can we speak about the parts when we don't know what the whole is.

LS: Oh, I see.

Same Student: And that the question and the implication you were discussing [was] that Socrates could say that laziness was vice—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: and that we do know the parts.

LS: Yes. Let us now disregard for one moment this all-important question, I mean, the answer to the question of how to live. But in another way I can explain this to you or illustrate to you as follows. You doubtless have heard of Kant's view that there is the thing in itself, true reality, which is unknowable; and there is on the other hand the phenomenal world, the things in space and time which are perfectly knowable, although in an infinite process of the progress of science. But there is an absolutely clear line, a gulf, separating these dimensions, the phenomenal world and the noumenal world. One can state Plato's view as follows: there is no such complete knowledge—even in infinite progress—possible, as Kant believes regarding the phenomenal things. And on the other hand, the noumenal things, the thing in itself, is not so inaccessible to us as Kant asserts, at least as far as theoretical knowledge goes. We live in a half—a light obscure. How do you say that? In a twilight.

Mr. Reinken: Penumbra.

LS: In a twilight. [Laughter] And we have never full clarity, nor have we ever full darkness. In a strange way, that is the situation of man at all times, that we always are aware in one way or the other in a very obscure way of all parts of the whole, and yet we have to live under these conditions. That cannot be changed. And one cannot even give a theory why this is so. That is in a way what Kant tried to do and in another way Locke before him: to give a theory[72] [of] what is knowable and what is not knowable, and to

what extent. Because that theory, again, goes beyond our power. So difficult is our situation. And yet Socrates, as a brave man, a courageous man, has no reason whatever for giving up: on the contrary, it is *the* reason for going on. That is what he says here to Meno.

Well, we have [to stop] now.[73] Perhaps I'll compensate you for a slightly improper act I committed. You know when you read detective stories you are supposed not to cheat, you remember? That's an iron rule of morality, not to look up the end. Now, and you as good boys and girls have only read up to the point we are now, if you did that, but I have read it through [great laughter], so I have a certain key. That is unfair, that I didn't divulge it to you before. Perhaps I will do it next time, at least provisionally. [Laughter]

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[1] Deleted "We…."
[2] Deleted "to."
[3] Deleted "He is…."
[4] Deleted "yeah, at least." Deleted "So."
[5] Moved "says."
[6] Deleted "that."
[7] Deleted "is."
[8] Deleted "Socrates."
[9] Deleted "…speaks of."
[10] Deleted "thought."
[11] Deleted "doesn't…."
[12] Deleted "then replaced…that is."
[13] Deleted "And now I think we should turn…."
[14] Moved "another" Deleted "…it is."
[15] Deleted "the expression…."
[16] Deleted "comprises… which."
[17] Deleted "before we use that…now."
[18] Deleted "standing."
[19] Deleted "In order to…."
[20] Deleted "say."
[21] Deleted "He later on."
[22] Deleted "maybe one more…let us read."
[23] Changed from ". So what he had…Klein had spoken of before is this: our opinions of the…about things consist of parts, and therefore the problem of parts and whole, so that the parts are known, while the whole is not known."
[24] Deleted "we have here…."
[25] Deleted "is."
[26] Moved "means."
[27] Deleted "One cannot know…yeah, one…."
[28] Deleted "But this leads to…."
[29] Deleted "that"
[30] Deleted "taken care of"
[31] Changed from "Now let us read Socrates'…Everything is now settled. Meno doesn't know what virtue is and now let us make…answer again. Please read."
[32] Deleted "now."
[33] Deleted "indicating…"
[34] Deleted "us."
[35] Changed from "Again we must…this has some importance here, this remark."
[36] Deleted "What is behind."
[37] Changed from "And then he calls him…And what Meno says to Socrates here is…He says, "You did it again."

[38] Deleted “made.”
[39] Deleted “made.”
[40] Deleted “did.”
[41] Deleted “this”
[42] Deleted “of.”
[43] Deleted “laziness.”
[44] Deleted “uncertain.”
[45] Deleted “learning…whether.”
[46] Deleted “more…I mean.”
[47] Deleted “that—with.”
[48] Deleted “In other words….”
[49] Deleted “has….”
[50] Changed from “Now you see, now Socrates disapproves of that.”
[51] Deleted “this”
[52] Deleted “are.”
[53] Deleted “of.”
[54] Deleted “and therefore”
[55] Deleted “wise men and women about…or.”
[56] Deleted “There is a need…He is hesitant. Socrates.”
[57] Changed from “Now, so that is then the story, the counter-story, try…which is meant to prove that learning is possible.”
[58] Deleted “from.”
[59] Deleted “necessary…is.”
[60] Deleted “And if…but.”
[61] Deleted “only…the."
[62] Deleted “has opposed to it now.”
[63] Deleted “that.” Moved “he knows.”
[64] Deleted “is of course…he.”
[65] Deleted “That you have to do at your own peril, such a distinction.”
[66] Deleted “not being”
[67] Deleted “and”
[68] Deleted “and of which.”
[69] Deleted “it.”
[70] Deleted “that.”
[71] Deleted “come that”
[72] Deleted “why we….”
[73] Deleted “I’ll do something.” Moved “next time.”

Session 7: no date

Leo Strauss: Now, yes. I promised you last time to let you in on a secret. I'll begin at the beginning again. The *Meno, the* dialogue on virtue, is the only dialogue that opens with a question shot at Socrates without any preparation. Therefore we must raise the question: Why does Meno approach Socrates, and approach him with this particular question? Is he wishing, is he deciding to write a piece on Socrates for *The New Yorker*, or is he himself concerned with this question? Now let us first read a passage at the end, or near the end of the dialogue—95a6 following, at the end of this speech. "Do tell me."

Mr. Reinken: "But you tell me: are there not noble and good men among your people?"[i]

LS: "Noble and good men," that is what is ordinarily translated "perfect gentlemen."

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] What then? Are they willing to make themselves available as teachers of the youth, to agree that they are teachers, and that virtue is teachable?
> [MEN.] No, by Zeus, Socrates. But you would sometimes hear from them that it is teachable and sometimes not.
> [SOC.] Should we then say that these men are teachers of this subject matter who do not agree that it is one and the same thing?
> [MEN.] It does not seem so to me, Socrates.

LS: "Who do not even agree on this very point," namely, that it is teachable. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> What is that? Do the sophists who alone proclaim it so seem to you to be teachers of virtue?
> [MEN.] I have often admired Gorgias in this above all, Socrates, that you never would hear him promising that. Instead, he might laugh at the others when he heard them promising it, but he does think that men need to be made skillful speakers.[ii]
> [SOC.] For we admitted that a subject of which there are neither teachers nor students is not teachable.
> [MEN.] We admitted it.
> [SOC.] But of virtue there nowhere appears to be any teachers, does there? (95a-c)

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[i] Mr. Reinken is not reading from the Loeb edition here; it is not clear which translation he is using.

[ii] Mr. Reinken misreads the text here in a very puzzling way, which accounts for Strauss's confusion about the translation. The first two statements begin at 95b9, but the third jumps suddenly to 96c3. He never reads the lines 95c7ff., which Strauss had intended him to read, and which are duly read by Strauss in his immediately reply.

LS: Now let us stop here. So we have here, I think, the answer.[1] Has this come out quite clear in the translation? Let me check on that. Yes, now Meno says: I don't know; I can't say, Socrates, for I myself am in the same position as the many. For sometimes the sophists seem to me to be teachers, and sometimes not. Meno doesn't know what to think about it. But Gorgias, his teacher, is sure that virtue cannot be taught. You can teach rhetoric; you cannot teach virtue. Meno, the follower of Gorgias as we know now, hesitates to follow him in the most important respect. That is the situation prior to the dialogue. Gorgias is *the* teacher of rhetoric, and *the* sophist is Protagoras. And we have observed right at the beginning of this course that the *Meno* is the dialogue toward which the *Gorgias* and the[2] [*Protagoras*] converge. Meno is a pupil of Gorgias but Meno does not agree entirely with Gorgias; he is also impressed by the claim of Protagoras that one can teach virtue. Meno approaches Socrates because he is perplexed. He is inclined to regard himself as a man who possesses virtue, i.e., he thinks highly of himself. But what if Protagoras should be right? Has Meno ever taken lessons in virtue? If Protagoras is right, Meno's virtue is defective because he hasn't acquired virtue in the proper manner. Let us assume now that Meno has heard that Socrates does not believe that virtue can be taught; in other words, that Socrates agrees with Gorgias. Meno approaches Socrates then as an arbiter between Gorgias and Protagoras, but as an arbiter biased in favor of Gorgias; he wants to be confirmed in his good opinion about himself. Socrates should put Meno's mind—we don't have to speak of Meno's conscience—at rest. Meno has also heard that Socrates is a funny fellow. He makes the men with whom he talks resourceless; he paralyzes them. But this does not worry Meno, who is sure that he can take care of himself. Socrates then asks him the strange question: What is virtue? As if this were not a matter which everybody knows!

Now Socrates showed then that Meno's answers are inadequate. But Meno is resourceful. Even after Gorgias's resources have been exhausted he still has a resource left, as we have seen: something which a poet said and which Meno accepts. But eventually Meno succumbs. Socrates did succeed in paralyzing him. We have seen this last time. And his reaction consists of two important parts. First, a threat to Socrates: Don't come ever to where I have power or to any place outside of Athens; and second, he now reveals his principle, the lazy speech,[3] literally, the *argos logos*: Learning or seeking is impossible. Now this implies of course that virtue cannot be acquired by learning or teaching. This is the fundamental reason why in his view Gorgias is right and Protagoras is wrong. The view that virtue cannot be acquired by learning or teaching presupposes of course that one knows what virtue is. But who does not know this? There is therefore no need for finding or seeking what virtue is, because we all know it. Good.

Now[4] here we are in the central part of the dialogue—not literally, but as a matter of fact. Socrates replies to Meno's lazy *logos* with a holy *logos*, and this consists of two parts which are decisive from the point of view of the question of what virtue is. The first suggestion is that one must live as piously as possible, which would mean virtue is piety. The other suggestion is that one must dedicate oneself to learning, to seeking. And learning and seeking are possible because learning is recollection. You will remember that we have[5] discussed that last time. So I believe we have now answered the original[6]

question as to what the beginning, the abrupt beginning of the dialogue means.[7] [But] we have not considered last time a few passages in Klein's *Commentary*, to which we will turn now. The first is on page 89.[8] Perhaps you read paragraph two.

Mr. Reinken:

> This is Socrates' answer to Meno's gibe: Clever rogue[iii] that you are are, Meno, you almost beguiled me. Now, how so? asks the (probably) surprised Meno. Socrates: "I perceive the reason why you drew an image of me." Meno: "Why do you think I did?" Socrates: "That I might reciprocate in drawing one of you. This I do know of all beautiful youths, that they are delighted when images are made of them, for theirs is the gain: the images of beautiful youths are beautiful also, aren't they? *But I shall not reciprocate by drawing an image of you*."
>
> Let us try to understand what this exchange means in the context of the dialogue. As once before, in the case of *kai egō* and *kai sy*—

LS: "Both I and you."

Mr. Reinken:

> there is some bantering going on here this time about "reciprocity." And the scales are, as they were then, highly uneven. Meno takes "revenge" for the ridicule he thinks Socrates has inflicted upon him by mocking Socrates in the image of the numb-fish. He also calls Socrates a *goēs*. This is a term used often enough in Platonic dialogues, and perhaps also in contemporary polite conversation, to describe a "crafty" one, a "sophist."

LS: The word which we translated by "bewitcher." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Socrates counters by calling Meno, jokingly to be sure, a *panourgos*—

LS: An unqualified rascal, a man[9] who is capable of everything. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> (and underscores this appellation a little later on[iv]). This again is a term peculiarly well suited to characterize a "sophist," perhaps more so than any other, for "to know all things"[v] and "to know how to make and to do all things without exception by a single art"[vi] is the ultimate claim either explicitly made or tacitly implied in the "profession" of a sophist. But this mutual "name-calling" has no parallel in a mutual "image drawing." When, according to Socrates himself, it seems to be Socrates' turn to present an image of Meno, he refuses to play the game. Why?

[iii] "Klein gives the Greek: (*panourgos*)."
[iv] Klein gives the Stephanus number: 81e6.
[v] Klein gives the Greek: (*panta epistasthai*).
[vi] Kelin gives the Greek: (*poiein kai dran miai technēi synapanta epistasthai pragmata*).

> Is it not, because there is no need for any image? Meno's soul, in Meno's lifetime, will presumably be stripped "naked" by Socrates; Meno will be shown as what he *is*, for all to see.[vii]

LS: In other words, therefore no likeness, which is only like him and not him . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> The stripping has already gone pretty far. Socrates' emphatic refusal to draw an image of Meno prepares us, we suspect, for the final stage of Meno's "undressing." And in that sense there is full, if still uneven, reciprocity in the exchange of threats: what is at stake though, whatever Meno might think, is not Socrates' life, nor Meno's for that matter, but for both of them their excellence[viii]. And there is no telling what a faithful image of Meno, the "beautiful," might look like.

LS:[10] Good. And we will see very soon how Meno's soul looks like if fully stripped, at least according to Klein's interpretation. Now then there is another passage about this lazy argument,[11] namely, this argument that[12] we cannot seek what we know because we know it already; but if we do not know it, we cannot seek it: how could we know that we have found it? [We'll read it only on page 92, the paragraph beginning with number 3][13].

Mr. Reinken:

> 3. On its own merits, the argument does not lack persuasiveness, aside from a flaw. It presupposes a field of "holes," as it were, each "hole" representing something "unknown," and without any link to any other "hole." According to this view, anything "unknown" is separated and isolated from everything else. This view ignores the way the "unknown" generally presents itself as an "unknown," circumscribed by questions that arise "naturally" whenever we become aware of some inconsistency or of a lack of connection between "known" pieces of our experience. It is true, our familiarity with these "pieces" tends to obscure their intrinsic incompleteness as well as their mutual relationship. An attempt to refute the argument directly would inevitably confront us again with the problem of the "whole" and its "parts," not to mention the problems of "knowing" and "not knowing," of "question" and "answer," and of the structure of a world in which questioning and answering are possible at all. The argument goes to the roots of things.[ix]

LS: Simplified, greatly simplified: there is nothing which is wholly unknown. In the moment we speak of it, we know it in one way or the other, and the fallacy of the argument is based on the [erroneous assumption that] we could possibly speak about something wholly unknown, [14][as] Klein [indicates] by the word "hole." You know, there is nothing we don't see in any way. Now there are some very important passages[15] in the

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[vii] Klein, 89-90.
[viii] Klein gives only the Greek: *aretē*.
[ix] Klein, 92.

next section of Klein's book, but we have to put a limit to that; perhaps only only one point. Let us read on page 96, number 3.

Mr. Reinken:

> A most important passage in Socrates' account is the statement, almost casually made, that "*all* that has come into being is connected in kinship"[x]—

LS: One can question the translation of *physis*, the whole *physis*, the whole nature as "all that has come into being." But this is not very important now. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> because without this assumption the entire account would not hold together. By virtue of this assumption everything, every bit the soul recollects can be understood as a "part" of a "*whole*" and can be traced back to a common origin. The word *physis* is attuned to the assumption of kinship, of common ancestry (the *syngeneia*) of *all* that is. This assumption makes the world a "whole."[xi]

LS: I emphasize the word "assumption." So in other words, how do we know that there is a whole? How do we know that? And to begin with, one can very well say it's an assumption. If you take present-day positivism, it would of course say you cannot speak of a whole strictly speaking, but nevertheless it cannot avoid[16] assum[ing] the whole. Just to take an example closer to our immediate interest: whatever you may say against the notion of a common good and the many difficulties arising there, you cannot avoid thinking of the common good. And to take again my old simple example, one of these positivists wrote a book on the "open society,"[17] by which he meant of course the good society.[xii] And the good society is the common good par excellence. So one cannot avoid[18] [speaking about that which] is implied in everything.

Now positivism is compelled to speak of the whole of being insofar as it can be truly known, i.e., the whole of the scientifically knowable. And as for the question [of] how this, the whole of the scientifically knowable, is related to the whole in any other different sense, that is no great concern for them, but they must speak about the whole. In other words, every human being has a comprehensive view, however incomprehensive it may be in fact, but from his point of view it will be comprehensive. It is a necessary assumption, if it is an assumption. The simple commonsense basis from which it starts[19] is what men knew at all times. Everything we know is under the heaven, the vault of heaven. The all-encompassing heaven makes everything else; the one heaven makes everything else a whole. And here we see another point of some interest for the understanding of Plato: this speech makes all things, the infinite variety of things, a whole is the highest, that to which we look up. That is surely [20]a [notion] which is very important for Plato's thought.

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[x] Klein gives the Greek: (*tēs physēos hapasēs syngenous ousēs*).
[xi] Klein, 96.
[xii] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945).

Now let me say a few words about the question of recollection. You recall the thesis of Socrates: learning is possible because the soul has seen, prior to this life, everything. And therefore, by knowing anything—this table—it[21] can recollect everything else, because everything is connected, is akin to everything else. So the recollection doctrine implies that man as man has within himself the knowledge of the whole in a dormant state. He may not be able fully to actualize it, but its actualization, to the extent to which it's possible, surely depends on his efforts. That is the practical lesson in which Socrates is here concerned. To use another Platonic expression, the philosopher must be a lover of toil, effort. This does not mean that there are not circumstances, external circumstances which render that effort impossible: for example, a very poor condition after a deluge, very few survivors on mountain tops, as Plato describes it in book 3 of the *Laws*;[xiii] and you can also imagine all other kinds of impediments to making these efforts. On the other hand, even when the conditions are most favorable, there is no guarantee whatever that the effort will in fact be made, a thought which Plato develops most clearly in the myth of the *Statesman*.[xiv] That describes the age of Kronos, the golden age. Men had everything they needed; there was no deprivation of any kind, and yet we do not know how they used their good, convenient, leisurely life, whether they tried to understand or whether they tried to merely (what they call)[22] "have fun." The truth is then, to repeat, in man as man. But that does not mean that every man is capable[23] [of] understand[ing] the truth. Whether and to what extent a man can actualize his potentiality depends on his nature. The philosopher must have a specific nature, a subject not mentioned, let alone discussed, in the *Meno*, but very much so in the *Republic*.

Now one can[24] express part of the point which I made now in the following way: whether philosophy is in fact possible or not depends on history, on [entirely] social[25] [and other relevant] circumstances. That is one way in which this would be put today. But this does not mean for Plato that the truth itself depends in any way on history. The truth itself is unchangeable. And we must understand[26] the importance of this point by contrasting it with a view now very powerful, the historicist view: the truth itself is changeable. That seems to be wholly unintelligible for someone coming from Plato, but I would like to give you one indication of how this could be understood. Let us assume with Plato that the theme of philosophy is the soul, the human soul in the first place. But what about the soul? I'll read to you a passage from a modern philosopher, Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, paragraph 45:

> The human soul and its limits, the hitherto attained extent of human inner experience, the heights, depths, and distance of this experience, the entire history of the soul up to now, plus its still unexhausted possibilities—this is a hunting reservation for a born psychologist.[xv]

[xiii] *Laws* 677a1-b9.
[xiv] *Statesman* 269a7-273e4.
[xv] Presumably Strauss's translation. A part of the final sentence (*und Freund der Grossen Jagd*) is not translated.

What Nietzsche here implies—the translation doesn't bring it out sufficiently—is this: the soul[27] changes, the soul is variable. Now if the theme of philosophy is variable, philosophy itself or truth itself is variable.

Now someone in the last row raised his hand. Mr. Malbin, yes?

Mr. Malbin: I was confused about what's necessary to actualize this—

LS: Let us call it potentiality.

Mr. Malbin: You said it depends upon to some extent upon a man's nature.[28]

LS: This is here not stated. That is in no way stated here in the *Meno*, not even alluded to. We shall see later on why.

Mr. Malbin: Is the ability to perceive what—first of all, presumably then this truth is in every soul, and the soul itself doesn't change as it passes through from life to death and death to life. Could this mean then that the realization of what's in the soul depends upon something in the man other than the soul? For example, his body, particularly the circumstances of the body?

LS: Ya, well there are conditions of the body which render [learning] impossible[29]. I mean, think of insanity, think of moronism, think of very grave diseases and pains which may render any effort of this kind impossible. That would[30] make sense, would it not?

Mr. Malbin: But is the difference between the philosopher and the truck driver—

LS: And the—

Mr. Malbin: The difference between a philosopher and a day laborer is that—

LS: Assuming that the day laborer is not by accident a day laborer.

Mr. Malbin: Assuming he is [so] by nature.

LS: Ya. Ya, all right.

Mr. Malbin: Both of their souls possess potentially or—

LS: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Malbin: to acquire truth. Is the difference between them a difference of soul?

LS: Ya, that is a long question. But what Plato means by this doctrine of recollection is surely this: that no soul can be human if it has not seen the truth prenatally. I mean that is, as we say, a mythical expression and it would have to be stated differently in

non-mythical language. But that distinguishes man from the brutes: the brutes do not have this fundamental awareness of the whole which every man as man has. Now as we know from the examples of idiocy and so on, not every human being has it in fact, but there are clearly defective human beings, [beyond] merely unintelligent human being[s]. [A merely unintelligent, or otherwise somewhat] defective human being would very well have this awareness, otherwise he couldn't speak. There could be no thinking, even wholly illogical thinking, without that fundamental awareness. That is what Plato means. So the body surely plays a role regarding the possibility of actualizing the potentiality.

Mr. Malbin: Then if the day laborer is able to do such simple things as add when he goes to the store, to make very simple premises and conclusions—

LS:[31] He will, [certainly. But] why do you take a day laborer? Take one of those (what are they called?) underdeveloped people who count only up to five.

Mr. Malbin: I am assuming that the physical conditions are present.

LS: Ya. I see, all right.

Mr. Malbin: Then what difference is there other than mere effort that would exist in the soul itself, for example?

LS: [32]What are the obstacles to philosophy? That is a very long question, and a question proper and important at any time, whether developed or undeveloped. And the body does play a certain role, there is no question. I mean, you know that certain changes in the frame, a bodily change can render wholly ineffectual this potentiality, let alone its actualization. Yes.

Student: I am afraid this may be a bit of a long question and it's also on such a commonsense level, I am a little—

LS: Please, please, that would be only to the good.

Same Student: But I'd like to return to what you said about the idea that to speak about the open society implies necessarily that you have a notion of the whole—

LS: Of the good society, I said. Well, let me make this quite clear, and I'm grateful to you that you raise the question. I illustrated the assumption of the whole which we all make by a more obvious assumption, namely, the assumption of the common good, which is also a whole[33]. And now [34]to prove that everyone must speak of the common good, including those who say [that] this is an old fogeyish notion, I gave the example of a well-known positivist who wrote a book on the open society, by which he meant that the open society is the good society.[xvi35] The point is this, to start from scratch: there are good things which cannot be enjoyed without being shared. I mean, you can enjoy a cigarette or an apple without other people smoking or eating an apple, but you cannot

[xvi] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945).

enjoy, for example, freedom merely for yourself. [36]I mean at least according to the democratic interpretation, you cannot be free if not all your fellow citizens are free. That is one implication of the open society. But that [37][means] then freedom is a common good and not a segment, [not] a good of a segment, a good of a part.

Same Student: It seemed to me that when you were talking about the notion of a whole that—I was thinking of it in at least two senses. One is the idea of a whole in terms of the good society, that is, we don't talk about particular parts of the good society but we have a notion of the whole.

LS: No, there are also partial goods and they have to be considered, without any question, but they will always have to be considered in the light of the common good. For example, if you think of the good of a part, say, of the senior citizen or of other underprivileged people [laughter], this is always understood—look at any discussion in the light of the common good. What is the democratic way of handling this kind of question, this partial question?

Same Student: I see. The only thing that confuses me is [that] you take a notion like freedom, for example. Or you know, say, anyone who talks about this must have a notion of the common or the open or the good society. But we know, for example, that Martin Luther King can write a book, *Stride Toward Freedom*,[xvii] and yet—or we can imagine a document on a similar sort of racial equality coming out of, say, communist China or something. And clearly, they're two very different items.

LS: Yes. That means the common good is frequently controversial, surely. But this doesn't mean that there is no common good. I mean,[38] one can perhaps show the necessity that the common good must appear in different lights from different perspectives, which then would lead to the question: Which perspective is the best? In which perspective do you see the common good as it truly is and not merely as it appears to people on the basis of their narrow interest or prejudice and so [on]? This causes no difficulty. What I meant, to make this quite clear, was to use the common good as a kind of type or exemplification of the whole. The *polis*, the city, is a whole within the whole, and therefore the frequent parallelism of the *polis* and the cosmos, the narrower whole and the whole simply, in ancient thought. There was someone else? Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I wonder if you might say a word about a sentence in Klein that I think bears on the point you were just making, on page 85.

LS: 85. I do hope you'll all read Klein's *Commentary*, [page] 81.

Mr. Reinken: No, [page] 85.

LS:[39] Which passage [on page 85]?

Mr. Burnam: The sentence I had in mind . . . the common awareness we all have . . .

[xvii] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom*: *The Montgomery Story* (1958).

LS: I can't hear you. Can you wait a second until this noise has gone. Yes? Which passage do you mean on page 85?

Mr. Burnam: Well, it's in the last paragraph about three quarters of the way down the page. He says, well, a couple of sentences—

LS: No. Well, why doesn't Mr. Reinken read the whole paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The question arises whether the consideration of "wholes" and their "parts" has any place within a procedure which deals with opinions "analytically."

LS: You know what that means; that was explained before, namely, analytically (as he said on page 84 at the beginning of the second paragraph)—the dialectical or analytical procedure. The dialectical procedure is the procedure of Socrates, and the analytical procedure is that of analytical mathematics, especially geometry. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> It seems that it does. Generally, any opinion on any subject can be understood to catch some "partially" true aspect of the subject under investigation. This means that, however mistaken each of us may be about that subject as a "whole," we are talking together about "the same thing" or, at least, are making an effort to talk about "the same thing." (That is why conversing among ourselves, or, as we say, "exchanging opinions," *is* possible and *can* be fruitful.) But that, in turn, indicates a common, if usually hidden, ground along which the conversation proceeds and where the "whole" is really "located." This—[xviii]

Mr. Burnam: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Burnam: It's that particular sentence.

LS: This was the difficulty. Now we could not possibly talk, or even fight, debate, violently debate without some agreement, is that not so? For example, if two people take entirely different views regarding the war in Vietnam, they differ about the same thing: the war in Vietnam, ya? Good. Now this is then the common ground without which a debate would not be possible. But then they have different opinions, one in favor of the present policy, others are against it. Generally speaking, without prejudging this particular issue of the war in Vietnam, it is so that the opinions are partial. Each of the debaters sees something which is there, but not the same [as] what the other sees. But the very partiality of the opinions, the very fact that opinions are partial, points to a complete opinion in which both parts are recognized to the extent to which they are true and rejected to the extent to which they are not true. Does it not make sense?[40] I mean, that is

[xviii] Klein, 85.

the reason why we disagree so frequently. All our opinions are partial, and therefore the question of part and whole is underlying any explication of what human speech, argument and so on means. This was the passage which you meant? That sentence?

Mr. Burnam: Yes. The thing that confused me was[41] [something like this]. Well, take the case of justice, and you say, as Aristotle does, that different men will have different opinions of it and each of those partial, and yet they can't have wholly different notions of it or they[42] wouldn't be able to converse. It seems to me that, however, the kind of common notion that enables them to converse about it couldn't be the same thing as the whole of—

LS: No,[43] they may be wholly unable to bring to light the whole, but without the underlying whole the disagreement would not be possible.[44] For example, take an extreme case: Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic*, who agrees more or less with what people ordinarily understand by justice. But he says it is bad, whereas ordinary people would say it is good. Now then you have to go beyond that and have to raise the question [of] what is good for a man, and decide on this basis the question of whether justice is good. That is all right. But at any rate, I see no difficulty in this point.

Mr. Burnam: Well, only that he seems to say that any conversation about justice presupposes knowledge of the whole of justice—

LS: No, no, no, no. On the contrary. [45]The Platonic word for that is divination. They have a divination—everyone has a divination of justice or whatever the subject may be,[46] and this divination can be stated more or less grandiloquently as some vague understanding of the word. Without it, it is absolutely impossible—this vague understanding means, more precisely stated, a partial understanding; and once you know that it is partial you are on your way to its completion, to[47] replac[ing] a part by the whole.

Student: Would I be right, then, [to say that] according to this formulation you could not have a true understanding of a part if you had a false understanding of the whole?

LS: Yes, but that is a very great difficulty. We discussed this already before. In every understanding of a part, an understanding of the whole is implied. But to that extent, the whole movement of thinking is a movement from a better understanding of a part to a better understanding of the whole, and vice versa. That's a great difficulty.[48] But the notion that we have available, say, in a book without any further ado, a knowledge of the whole which we can then apply to every partial question is, as they say, too optimistic. This is not true. We live in an in-between knowledge and ignorance.[49] We are not [simply ignorant]: no one, [not] even the most ignorant child, is simply ignorant. And the wisest of men is not simply wise. We move in between the two. And there is no elegant solution to this difficulty. Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: I realize this is a long question and probably we can't go into it, but it just seems to me that Klein's point, and implicitly Plato's point, cannot fully be established unless one refutes the objection, let's say of Locke, that the things about which we agree

do not signify any knowledge about something existing outside of ourselves, but refer only to what is necessary [in order] to speak with each other.

LS: The only trouble is that,[50] [while] surely Locke can say that—let us assume that that is the correct rendering—but Locke's saying it doesn't make it true. He would have to prove it. And then he would have to start as we all start, namely, from the things which are [most obviously true]. For example: this is Mr. Schaefer; we are sitting now in this room—what we all loosely but not unintelligibly call commonsense understanding. That is also the starting point of Locke as well as of anybody else. Whether Locke has made this sufficiently clear, or whether his belief in the authority of people like Descartes and Newton has not induced him to be too sweeping about these primary questions, that's a long question. Now let us continue in our reading. We stopped after the passage on recollection and[51] we [will] hear now Meno's response to it in 81e3 to 5,

Mr. Reinken: Socrates had said he was willing to go on?

LS: No. "And I trusting this *logos* to be true."

Mr. Reinken: "I'm willing to inquire together with you what virtue is."

LS: So[52] now how does Meno react to that?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Yes, Socrates, but how are you saying this: that we do not learn but what we call learning is recollection. Can you teach me that this is how it stands?[xix]

LS: Now let us stop here. Meno admits the superiority of the holy *logos* of Socrates but he doesn't quite understand it. He does not know that learning is recollection; he has only heard that assertion. And now in addition he made a certain slip. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I just now said, Meno, that you are an unscrupulous villain and now you ask if can teach you when I say there is no teaching but only recollection, in order to make me appear to have contradicted myself at once. By Zeus—

LS: No, let us wait here. Now Meno may be a very great scoundrel and we have good evidence for believing that. But his raising this question, Socrates should teach him, in the form he does it is surely not due to any villainy on his part. He is honestly, honestly bewildered. That is clearly the case. Yes, and Meno does [what] many people, honest and dishonest, do when they are quite sure that they are, in this particular case at least, honest: [he] swear[s]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xix] There is no indication of what translation Mr. Reinken is using. It is quite a literal one.

> [MEN.] By Zeus no, Socrates, I was not looking toward that but spoke only out of habit. But if you could somehow show me that it is as you say, show it. (81e1-82a6)

LS: Ya. So Meno is generally interested, you see. He is honestly shocked by Socrates's suggestion that he might have played a trick on Socrates. He swears for the first time. The oath in the *Meno* [is something which] we cannot discuss before all the evidence is in, but we remember that the first man who swore in this dialogue was Socrates, and Meno only here. The neighborhood of the holy speech may have something to do with this swearing. He is not a crook; his mistake is due only to habituation. Now this leads of course to the interesting question of whether crookedness or villainy itself cannot be due to habituation, but[53] we do not have to go into that now. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] That is not very easy, but all the same, I am willing to make an effort for your sake. But pull up one of these many followers of yours here, for me—

LS: No, let us say "servants" to make it a bit clearer, although "followers" might be a more literal translation.

Mr. Reinken:

> whichever one you want, so that I may demonstrate on him for you.
> [MEN.] Certainly. You, come up here.
> [SOC.] He is Greek and speaks Greek?
> [MEN.] Very much so, he was born in the house.
> [SOC.] Now, keep your mind on which way it appears to you, whether he recollects or whether he learns from me.
> [MEN.] Of course I shall keep it in mind. (82a7-b8)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here for a moment. Now Socrates knows that he undertakes a difficult task in proving that learning is truly recollection. But Socrates is not afraid of difficulty; he is not soft. And he says here he does it for the sake of Meno.[54] One of the slaves should come as a guinea pig—any of the slaves will do, for every man can learn. Here of course a difficulty is implied: that is true up to a point, but not simply. Meno's interest is now aroused; this is a thing which he has never heard before. Now then there[55] follows here in the sequel the famous scene with the slave boy. We must remember the importance of the slave-master issue from the very beginning of the dialogue. Meno is obsessed, as it were, by the fact that the difference between the free man and slave is radical. He of course is a free man, a born free man and not a slave.[56] A slave is generally speaking a human being who is forced to work, i.e., he cannot afford to be lazy, whereas a free man can. And this gives him, the slave, a certain advantage.

Now in Klein's *Commentary*, on pages 97 following—[we cannot read that passage]—the following suggestion is made, which sums up [an] earlier conclusion and leads a step further. Now you will remember the point which Klein made before: virtue is akin and follows knowledge [LS writes on the blackboard], and knowledge is acquired by

recollection. Now vice, I will write . . . ignorance. And this is linked up now in Klein's definition with remembering—let us say memory. Now we have seen that memory plays such a great role for Meno. He is always asked to remember . . . And Klein has a long discussion later (which we must skip for the time being) about the relation of recollection and memory, memory being something effortless—you remember [simply]; recollection requires some effort: you must bring back what has been forgotten. But we will disregard that for the time being.

Now here there follows the famous scene with the slave. Socrates shows what learning is recollection means by questioning the slave about a mathematical subject. Now two questions must be raised: Why does Socrates choose a mathematical example, and why does he choose this particular mathematical example? Now learning is in Greek *mathēsis*. That has the same root as mathematics. Now[57] [it] is not yet Platonic usage to speak of mathematics, *ta mathēmatika*, but that was so to speak already in the cards. We can say mathematics is *the* subphilosophic learning, *mathēma*. Proof: the education of the philosophers in the *Republic*. If virtue is knowledge, it is not likely to be the kind of knowledge which we have in mathematics. The proof is very simple, because if virtue is knowledge [it] means virtue [is] equal to mathematics; then all mathematicians and only mathematicians would be virtuous, which I think no one has ever asserted.[58] The kind of knowledge which virtue could be or be connected with is in Greek *phronēsis*, which we can translate by "being sensible." The traditional translation is "prudence" or "practical wisdom." Now *phronēsis* necessarily affects life in a way in which no other kind of knowledge does. A man who knows the right thing but does not do it is not a sensible man. Think of a man who knows he should not get drunk every day. He knows it is absolutely preposterous to do that, and yet [he] is drunk every day. No one would call him a sensible man. The utmost you can say is that he knows what he should do, but it is a wholly ineffective knowledge. *Phronēsis* is a kind of knowledge which necessarily determines action and choice. It is essentially practical or, as we say, moral. The example of mathematics is therefore to some extent misleading. When Socrates can prove that you can learn this kind of thing, the application to virtue remains a question.

Now as regards the particular mathematical problem, it has to do with a thing now called, for some time called irrational numbers, say, the root of 2. Irrational numbers. Irrational comes from the Greek *alogon*, which means "speechless," "reasonless." It reminds us of the limits of reason, and the limits of reason are indicated in the Platonic work above all and most frequently by two things, by two distinctions. [First], the distinction between *logos* and *ergon*, between speech and deed. And think of this case of the man who has the right *logos* regarding not drinking, but what is decisive here is what he does: the deed. And the second distinction which intimates the limits of *logos*, which reminds us therefore of the *alogon*, of the irrational, is the distinction between *logos* and *muthos*, between *logos* and myth. And we have[59] been given an example of a myth shortly before, although, as one cannot emphasize too strongly, the term myth was never used. So it is a great, dangerous step for which every one of us would have to take the responsibility if he calls the recollection story a myth. Socrates never called it that.

So now let us now begin with the reading of the conversation between Socrates and the slave. Of course one doesn't know who that is. He was born in the house. Who fathered that boy is in no way said, and that is left to everybody's guess. I do not wish to say anything which might be construed as an unfair accusation against Meno.[60] Now I plan to proceed in this way, following Klein's proceeding: first to read Socrates's conversations with the boy, and skip the comments—the intervening conversation between Socrates and Meno—and then when we are through with the conversation with the boy, we will return[61] [and] discuss for the first time the accompanying conversations[62] between Socrates and Meno. Now let us begin at the beginning. Let us read the first part.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Now tell me, boy, do you recognize the square as being a four-angled figure of this sort here?
> [Boy] I do.
> [SOC.] Then a figure having all these lines equal, which are four in number, is a square?
> [Boy] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Does it not also have these lines here, through the middle, equal?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] Might a figure such as this not be greater or smaller?
> [Boy] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Now, if this side here were two feet and this side also two feet, how many feet would the whole be? Look at it this way: if it were two feet this way but only one foot the other way, the figure would then be once times two feet, would it not?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] But since it also two feet the other way, two times two arises, does it not?
> [Boy] It arises.
> [SOC.] That is, two times two feet arises?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] How many then are the twice two feet? Reckon it, and tell me.[xx]

LS: Ya. That is important. "After having reckoned," "after having figured it out, speak." Ya? Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> [Boy] Four, Socrates.
> [SOC.] Might not another figure twice as great as this one arise and of the same sort, having all the lines equal just as this one does?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] How many feet will it then be?
> [Boy] Eight.

[xx] It is not clear what translation Mr. Reinken reads from. It is neither the Loeb edition nor Jowett's translation.

> [SOC.] Come then, try and tell me how long each line of that figure will be? For the side of this one is two feet. Of what length, then, is the line forming the side of a doubly great figure?
> [Boy] Clearly, Socrates, it is doubly great. (82b9-e3)

LS: Yes. Now and let us only read now—

Mr. Reinken:

> Now watch him recollecting one thing after another, just as one needs to recollect—

LS: No, no what he says immediately after that.

Mr. Reinken: Tell me folks—

LS: No, no: "Don't you see, Meno—"

Mr. Reinken: Oh, sure.

> [SOC.] Do you see, Meno, that I teach him none of this, but that all I do is to ask questions? And now he thinks he knows the sort of line from which the figure eight feet will arise. Or does it not seem so to you?
> [MEN.] To me it does.
> [SOC.] But does he know?
> [MEN.] Surely not. (82e4-10)

LS: Yes. So in other words, the boy is wrong. Now can you describe the problem on the blackboard there, as a born mathematician? [Mr. Reinken draws the figure, describing it.]

Mr. Reinken: Well, this line is two feet, [so the figure is] two by two. And he spoke of lines through the middle, and those would be the horizontal and vertical bisectors.

LS: Socrates doesn't use any technical terms. [Laughter] No, that's all right. Ya?

Mr. Reinken: Now you simply put the little boy on a square that's [laughter] four by four. [Mr. Reinken continues to draw] Consider these all to be squares. [Laughter]

Student: When he was referring to the one that's two on one side and one on the other, what—

Mr. Reinken: Oh, they were counting one-two on one side, and if he had taken a rectangular figure [laughter]—two feet by one feet.

LS: Why don't you simply take this figure like that? [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: . . . Look on pages 100 and 101 [of Klein]. Yes, figures 1 and 2 . . . You've doubled the length, but when you double this side goes up, this side goes up, you double everything, so surely the area doubles.

LS: You note here that Socrates apostrophizes the boy by "you boy," *ō pai* in Greek, only at the beginning. The boy [first] says "*ō Sōkrates*"[63] when Socrates had asked him: Now reckon, now figure out. And then he says, slightly trembling: Four, Socrates—meaning the trembling explains why he adds Socrates's name. Yes, and there is another case of this kind. Let us read then the next speech of Socrates and the boy at the end of 82e: "You tell me."

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Now you tell me, from the line of double length, do you say that the figure of double arises? I am speaking of figure of this sort: not great on one side and short on the other, but let it be equal on every side, just as this one here is, and double this one, or eight feet. But see if it still seems to you to stem from the line of double.
> [Boy] To me it does.
> [SOC.] Does this same double not arise if we add on another line of the same at this point here?
> [Boy] Certainly.
> [SOC.] From this line now you say will stem the figure eight feet, if four lines of this are generated?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] Then let us draw in four equal lines out of this one. Would this not be the figure here which you say is eight feet?
> [Boy] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Are these four squares here not contained in it, each one of which is equal to this one of four feet?
> [Boy] Yes.
> [SOC.] How much then arises? Is it not four times as much?
> [Boy] Of course.
> [SOC.] Then is four times as much the same as two times?
> [Boy] No, by Zeus.
> [SOC.] But how much?
> [Boy] Four times as much.
> [SOC.] From the line of double, then, boy, not the twofold but the four-fold figure arises.
> [Boy] You speak the truth. (82e14-83c2)
> [SOC.] [xxi] Quite so, Meno. Then did he not either receive the knowledge which he now has?

LS: No, no, no. What is that?

Mr. Reinken: No, did I quote the wrong—

[xxi] At this point, Mr. Reinken skips apparently to 84a5, which causes confusion.

LS: "Four times four is sixteen, is it not?" (83c2)

Mr. Reinken: Does this—

LS: Four times four is sixteen.

Mr. Reinken: . . . We're at 83. "Certainly, from this line now—

LS: No, no, this is very important, this point which you omitted.

Student: Four times four is sixteen. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: Where are we?

Student: 83c. [Loeb edition, page] 309.

Mr. Reinken: Thank you.

LS: Now re-read what you have read before.

Mr. Reinken: "And if it is four times four it is sixteen, is it not?"[xxii]

LS: Now that is quite interesting, you see. When he spoke previously of how much are two times two feet, Socrates added: Figure it out and say it. Now here, when he says four times four, Socrates himself gives the answer: it is sixteen. You see he does not suppose that the boy has any knowledge to speak of, of numbers, and that is a clear sign of that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> [SOC.] What line will give us a space of eight feet? This one gives us a four-fold space, does it not?
> [Boy.] It does.
> [SOC.] And a space of four feet is made from this line of half the length?
> [Boy.] Yes.
> [SOC.] Very well; and is not a space of eight feet double the size of this one, and half the size of this other?
> [Boy.] Yes.
> [SOC.] Will it not be made from a line longer than the one of these, and shorter than the other?
> [Boy.] I think so.
> [SOC.] Excellent: always answer just what you think. Now tell me, did we not draw this line two feet, and that four.
> [Boy]: Yes.

[xxii] Mr. Reinken resumes reading from the Loeb translation here.

[SOC.] Then the line on the side of the eight-foot figure should be more than this of two feet, and less than the other of four?
[Boy.] It should.
[SOC.] Try and tell me how much you would say it is.
[Boy.] Three feet.
[SOC.] Then if it is to be three feet, we shall add on a half to this one, and so make it three feet? But here we have two, and here one more, and so again on that side there are two, and another one; and that makes the figure of which you speak.
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] Now if it be three this way and three that way, the whole space will be thrice three feet, will it not?
[Boy] So it seems.
[SOC.] And thrice three feet are how many?
[Boy] Nine.
[SOC.] And how many feet was that double one to be?
[Boy] Eight.
[SOC.] So we fail to get our eight-foot figure from this three-foot line.
[Boy] Yes, indeed.
[SOC.] But from what line shall we get it? Try and tell us exactly; and if you would rather not reckon it out, just show what line it is.
[Boy] Well, on my word, Socrates—

LS: Ya, "by Zeus."

Mr. Reinken:

[Boy]: I do not know. (83c2-84a2)

LS: Now he is sort of shocked. You know: God forbid . . . Now let us[64] skip the conversation between Socrates and Meno first, and read the rest of the conversation with the boy, in[65] [84d].

Mr. Reinken:[66]

[SOC.] Tell me, boy: here we have a square of four feet, have we not? You understand?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] And here we add another square equal to it?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] And here a third equal to either of them?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] Now shall we fill up this vacant space in the corner?
[Boy.] By all means.
[SOC.] So here we must have four equal spaces?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] Well, now, how many times larger is this whole space than this other?
[Boy.] Four times.
[SOC.] But it was to have been only twice, you remember?

[Boy.] To be sure.
[SOC.] And does this line, drawn from corner to corner, cut in two each of these spaces?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] And have we here four equal lines containing this space?
[Boy.] We have.
[SOC.] Now consider how large this space is.
[Boy.] I do not understand.
[SOC.] Has not each of the inside lines cut off half of each of these four spaces?
[Boy.] Yes.
[SOC.] And how many spaces of that size are there in this part?
[Boy.] Four.
[SOC.] And how many in this?
[Boy.] Two.
[SOC.] And four is how many times two?
[Boy.] Twice.
[SOC.] And how many feet is this space?
[Boy.] Eight feet.
[SOC.] From what line do we get this figure?
[Boy] From this.

LS: You see, he points; it is not said. Ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[SOC.] From the line drawn corner-wise across the four-foot figure?
[Boy] Yes.
[SOC.] The professors call it the diagonal: so if the diagonal is its name, then according to you, Meno's boy, the double space is the square of the diagonal.
[Boy] Yes, certainly it is, Socrates. (84d3-85b7)

LS: Yes. Now this is the whole scene between Socrates and the boy where the boy has learned the fact that—in modern language, that the square of two cannot be a number. I mean, only on the basis of certain great changes in modern mathematics was it possible to speak of irrational numbers. That's not a number. It is not a natural number, nor [is it] a fraction, and the boy has properly understood that. Now Klein has a very long comment on it, [67]using his knowledge of ancient mathematics all the time as you see from the footnotes. I mention here one point which comes out. The boy gives three answers before he is embarrassed. So does Meno, according to his perplexity. But what happens to the boy in contradistinction to Meno, after he has become perplexed, paralyzed, and embarrassed? He gets out of the embarrassment: he becomes resourceful again. One can only hope that the same will happen to Meno. Now let us[68] read one point in Klein, on page 102, "To help the boy out of this perplexity."

Mr. Reinken:

To help the boy out of this perplexity, Socrates goes back to his first drawing and completes it (Fig. 4) so as to have, as in Fig. 2, a square space of sixteen

("square") feet. The drawing of the new figure is done by Socrates while he continues his questioning and makes sure that the boy "understands"[xxiii] and remembers what was said before[xxiv]. And it is Socrates again who finally draws the diagonals inside the four squares (each equal to the given one) that constitute the new figure. Each diagonal cuts each of the small squares in half and all four diagonals are equal in length, as the boy can see (or thinks that he can see).

LS: What does he mean by that?

Mr. Reinken: He hasn't proved it.

LS: No, no, that's not the point, because there cannot be strict equality in anything which Socrates [draws]. That is the point: no square, no line drawn on sand is truly straight. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Socrates invites the boy to consider the space contained by these diagonals and asks: "How large is this space?"[xxv] The boy has no answer: he cannot follow Socrates at this point. All he says is: "I do not understand."[xxvi] Through a series of questions it becomes clear that that space (four halves of the small squares) is precisely[xxvii] the double of the given square. The solution to the problem is at hand. "From what line [does the double square result]?" asks Socrates. And the boy, pointing to a diagonal, says: "From this one." With considerable gravity Socrates puts a seal on this conclusion: "If 'diagonal' be the name of such a line [as the "experts" call it], then, as you, Meno's slave, say, the double space results from the diagonal." The boy has the last word: "Very definitely so, Socrates!"

LS: Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

The straight question-answer pattern in all this exchange between Socrates and the young slave is interrupted only once by a seemingly marginal "pedagogical" remark on Socrates' part. Replying to one of Socrates' suggestive questions, the boy says[xxviii]: "Yes, it seems to me that this is so."[xxix] Whereupon Socrates: "Excellent! What seems to you [to be true][xxx], just that keep answering!" It is the boy's *own* opinions that Socrates wants to hear. But does not Socrates "manipulate" those opinions throughout in a rather transparent way?

[xxiii] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*manthaneis*? 84 d4).
[xxiv] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*ē ou memnēsai* 84 e3).
[xxv] Klein gives the Greek: (*pēlikon ti esti touto to chōrion?).*
[xxvi] Klein gives the Greek: (*ou manthanō*).
[xxvii] Klein gives the Greek: (*akribōs*).
[xxviii] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (83d1).
[xxix] Klein gives the Greek: (*Emoige dokei houtō*).
[xxx] Klein gives part of the Greek: (*to . . . soi dokoun*).

> We have to consider this question as well as the entire "exhibition" of the young slave carefully, before turning back to the main exhibition[xxxi] involving Meno himself.[xxxii]

LS: Yes. Now to repeat, this exchange between Socrates and the slave was meant to prove that learning is recollection, i.e., that the boy knew all these things in advance in a dormant state, and Socrates has only made actual this potential knowledge. And clearly Socrates plays a much bigger role in this boy's learning than the doctrine of recollection simply stated [69]seems to imply, and that[70] will be discussed in the sequel. I would like to mention here only one point. The question which[71] supplies the context to this geometric lesson is the question, What is virtue?—generally stated, a "what is" question. Now when you look for example at the end of this exchange, Socrates's last word, "The sophists call this a diagonal," "sophist" is the literal word. [One could say] the wise men of sorts call this a diagonal. What is the place of the "what is" question in[72] the lesson given by Socrates to[73] the slave boy? The "what is" question is never raised, and when it is necessary to call something by a name, Socrates supplies a name. I mean, he doesn't have to explain to him square.[74] Let us take a simple example. [LS writes on the blackboard] Triangle. He doesn't even have to say what an angle is; everyone who knows Greek knows what an angle is. And a triangle is a space, a place . . . this shape, a triangle. So no "what is" question is ever raised, nor ever answered. And that is of some importance for the later development because, as we can say, Meno (you must not forget the context)[75] is supposed to learn through this exhibition not only the truth of the assertion that learning is recollection but also that learning is possible, and more specifically that it is possible to find out, to discover, what virtue is. But the mathematical example does not give any inkling of "what is" questions. And no one can say—no one who has read the earlier part of the *Meno* can say that the mathematicians do not answer "what is" questions, that the mathematicians do not give definitions. We got an example of a mathematician's definition before. This is one of the paradoxes.

Now the graver point, [the] more immediately important point is, of course, as Klein put it here: Does not Socrates manipulate these opinions? In other words, is not the whole thing a hoax? Now he answers this quite carefully in the sequel, but I think we should not read this now; we shall read it right at the beginning of the next class and perhaps read [now] the first exchange between Socrates and Meno on the exchange between Socrates and the boy. Do you have that, in 82e4? You have already read a part of it before. "Don't you see, Meno, that I do not teach him anything."

Mr. Reinken: Page 307, Loeb.

> [SOC.] Do you observe, Meno, that I am not teaching the boy anything, but merely asking him each time? And now he supposes that he knows about the line required to make a figure of eight square feet; or do you not think he does?
> [MEN.] I do.
> [SOC.] Well, does he know?
> [MEN.] Certainly not.

[xxxi] Klein gives only the Greek: *epideixis*.
[xxxii] Klein, 102.

> [SOC.] He just supposes it, from the double size required?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] Now watch his progress in recollecting, by the proper use of memory. (82e4-13)

LS:[76] Yes. So in other words, not everyone can make another recollect. So Meno, in contradistinction to the boy, knows geometry to some extent because he sees that the boy has given the wrong answer. And Socrates is going to exhibit to Meno the right way in which one recollects. Now let us read the other exchange in 84a3. This follows on the boy's having become completely paralyzed, as Meno had become paralyzed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Loeb, 313.

> [SOC.] There now, Meno, do you observe what progress he has already made in his recollection? At first he did not know what is the line that forms the figure of eight feet, and he does not know even now: but at any rate he thought he knew then, and confidently answered as though he knew, and was aware of no difficulty; whereas now he feels the difficulty he is in, and besides not knowing, does not think he knows.
> [MEN.] That is true.

LS: Yes. So in other words, he is now in the position in which he can learn, because he knows that he does not know. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And is he not better off in respect of the matter which he did not know?
> [MEN.] I think that too is so.
> [SOC.] Now, by causing him to doubt and giving him the torpedo's shock, have we done him any harm?
> [MEN.] I think not.
> [SOC.] And we have certainly given him some assistance, it would seem, towards finding out the truth of the matter: for now he will push on in the search gladly, as lacking—

LS: "Gladly." That is important: "gladly."

Mr. Reinken:

> as lacking knowledge; whereas then he would have been only too ready to suppose he was right in saying, before any number of people any number of times, that the double space must have a line of double the length for its side. (84a3-c2)

LS: Here the allusion to Meno is quite obvious: just as Meno has made many speeches before many people about virtue, this boy has spoken about a geometrical question to many people on many occasions [LS chuckles] and so on. Yes. Now the comparison is entirely in favor of that poor boy, obviously. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] It seems so.
> [SOC.] Now do you imagine he would have attempted to inquire or learn what he thought he knew, when he did not know it, until he had been reduced to the perplexity of realizing that he did not know, and had felt a craving to know?
> [MEN.] I think not, Socrates.
> [SOC.] Then the torpedo's shock was of advantage to him?
> [MEN.] I think so.
> [SOC.] Now you should note how, as a result of this perplexity, he will go on and discover something by joint inquiry with me, while I merely ask questions and do not teach him; and be on the watch to see if at any point you find me teaching him or expounding to him, instead of questioning him on his opinions. (84c3-d2)

LS: Yes. Now the slave has been reduced to resourcelessness, *aporia*, just as Meno was. But being a slave, he did not of course become angry as Meno did. He was not harmed by being reduced to that resourcelessness or perplexity—on the contrary; he will now gladly engage in seeking because he knows that he does not know. In his previous state of ignorance, he would not have dreamt of seeking but would have made many speeches, like Meno on virtue. Now there are of course quite a few questions. One of them is this: Is knowledge of one's ignorance a sufficient reason for engaging in investigation? Is this a sufficient reason? Are there not many things which we do not know and[77] [which] we do not have the slightest urge to know? We surely cannot know whether the slave will engage and gladly engage in the quest. I mean, he did his job as a slave, as he was told by his master to sit down and answer this gentleman's question. What he will do later, no one can tell. He is a slave who must obey orders, and what is in no way stated here [but] only intimated is [that] in order to do that, he must also have a certain nature. He must not be completely dumb, otherwise he could not have followed Socrates's questions. But how good he would be as a geometer, if he were to engage in it, that we cannot know in any way.

So[78] next time we will [79]read first the last exchange between Socrates and Meno and then consider Klein's very detailed discussion of this question: Does Socrates not play a hoax? Does he not simply manipulate the slave, or is there some genuine learning here? With this we will begin next time.

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[1] Deleted "Meno…No, have we read that? I'm sorry."
[2] Deleted "*Meno."*
[3] Deleted "as."
[4] Deleted "Socrates…."
[5] Deleted "read that…."
[6] Deleted "…the."
[7] Deleted "And we have…."
[8] Deleted "Let us..on page 89."
[9] Deleted "doing…."
[10] Deleted "Now…."
[11] Deleted "and." Moved "we'll read only on page 92, the paragraph beginning with number 3."
[12] Deleted "what we know…."
[13] Deleted "Now let us read Klein's comment on page 92."
[14] Deleted "that means"

[15] Deleted “in the sequel.”
[16] Deleted “to.”
[17] Deleted “and.”
[18] Deleted “that. That.”
[19] Deleted “from which this starts.”
[20] Deleted “thought”
[21] Deleted “can be…it.”
[22] Deleted “to.”
[23] Deleted “to.”
[24] Deleted “say regarding….”
[25] Deleted “and so on.”
[26] Deleted “from…in a sense.”
[27] Deleted “is….”
[28] Deleted “Ah…so….”
[29] Moved “learning.”
[30] Deleted “be…would.”
[31] Deleted “He will…yes, and even less than that. He may only…Why do you…why do you take a day laborer, take one of these, how are they called? Underdeveloped people who count only up to five.”
[32] Deleted “Oh, there can be…that is a very long question.”
[33] Deleted “the common good.”
[34] Deleted “I say”
[35] Deleted “There are….”
[36] Deleted “it must be at least”
[37] Deleted “is”
[38] Deleted “they…And.”
[39] Deleted “Eighty-five.”
[40] Deleted “All our opinions….”
[41]Deleted “that, say, if he were to….”
[42] Deleted “would be talking…or they.”
[43] Deleted “but the whole….”
[44] Deleted “And of course that doesn’t mean….”
[45] Deleted “but there must”
[46] Deleted “Otherwise…and.”
[47] Deleted “making the part…to.”
[48] Changed from “But if..I mean, the notion that we have available, say, in a book, without any further ado, a knowledge of the whole which we can then apply to every partial question is, as I say, too optimistic.”
[49] Changed from “We are not…no one, even the least…the most ignorant child, is not simply ignorant.”
[50] Deleted “Locke….”
[51] Deleted “we hear… now.”
[52] Deleted “in another words…so.”
[53] Deleted “this….”
[54] Deleted “Some slaves….”
[55] Deleted “come….”
[56] Deleted “The slave is….”
[57] Deleted “this.”
[58] Deleted “Mathematics….”
[59] Deleted “seen….”
[60] Deleted “So.”
[61] Deleted “..we will.”
[62] Deleted “with….”
[63] Moved “first.” Deleted “in….”
[64] Deleted “read then…let us.”
[65] Deleted “48d.”
[66] Deleted “‘Now you should note how’—oh”
[67] Deleted “which”
[68] Deleted “see…let us.”

[69] Deleted “seems to say”
[70] Deleted “is….”
[71] Deleted “gives the context.”
[72] Deleted “the conversation…in.”
[73] Deleted “Meno…to.”
[74] Deleted “because…or.”
[75] Deleted “Meno.”
[76] Deleted “Yeah.”
[77] Deleted “where.”
[78] Deleted “we will….”
[79] Deleted “begin”

Session 8: April 21, 1966

Leo Strauss: Now I remind you of where we stand. Socrates has proven to Meno's satisfaction, through questioning Meno's slave on a geometric question, that learning, being recollection, is possible. The geometric question, if I may remind you, was this: We have a square [of four square feet], each side of which is two feet[1]. How much is a side of a square twice as big, i.e., of a square of eight square feet? The boy's first answer was [that] the side must be four feet long, but this proves to be wrong because the square would be sixteen square feet. The boy's second answer is [that] the side will be three feet long. He is quite reasonable: four was too much and two was too little. But then the square would be nine square feet, which is also not what he wanted. And his final and right answer: the side is the diagonal of the square of one foot, i.e., in our language, the root of two. And this side can only be shown, pointed to, by pointing at the diagonal. It cannot be spoken. As we call it, it is an irrational, an unspeakable number.

Now we have first to raise the question: What are the lessons which Socrates draws from the slave scene in his conversation with Meno? And we have[2] [already begun] the reading of this section. We have to complete it now; 85b8 following. Do you have it?

Mr. Reinken: "The Sophists call it the diagonal—"

LS: No, no. This was—the end of that speech [with the boy]. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> [SOC.] What do you think, Meno? Was there any opinion that he did not give as an answer of his own thought?

LS: "Was there any opinion which was not his own?"

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] No, they were all his own.
> [SOC.] But you see, he did not know, as we were saying a while since.
> [MEN.] That is true.
> [SOC.] Yet he had in him these opinions, had he not?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] So that he who does not know about any matters, whatever they be, may have true opinions on such matters, about which he knows nothing? (85b8-c7)

LS: Now "has in himself true opinions about those things of which he knew nothing." That seems to be so; that comes to sight [in the argument]. Now the slave has uttered his opinions. The opinions were in him. And now Socrates makes a jump: the true opinions are in the not-knowing man—in every not-knowing man, not only these slaves. But there is obviously a difficulty here, because the false opinions are also in the not-knowing man. Meno doesn't see the difficulty, as you have seen. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And at this moment those opinions have just been stirred up in him, like a dream; but if he were repeatedly asked these same questions in a variety of forms, you know he will have in the end as exact an understanding of them as anyone.
> [MEN.] So it seems.

LS: So without Socrates's questions, of course the true opinions would never have come to light. Yet a single questioning, as we have witnessed, will not do. There is need for repetitions so that he arrives at perfect knowledge of the subject and not merely at opinions. Now these repetitions can also be called more precisely the practice, [the] continuing practice, training, [going back to] that point which Meno made in his initial question, when he said: Is virtue acquired by learning or by practice or by nature? Practice [3]is alluded to here by Socrates. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Without anyone having taught him, and only through questions put to him, he will understand, recovering the knowledge out of himself?

LS: "He *will* understand." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And is not this recovery of knowledge, in himself and by himself, recollection?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] And must he not have either once acquired or always had the knowledge—"[i] (85c7-d10)

LS: No, no. "Must he not the knowledge which he now possesses either have acquired at some time or have always possessed?" Yes. Now let us stop here for a moment. The boy will know, will recollect, namely, if he practices; this single experiment will not do. And then Socrates goes over very abruptly to [claiming that] the boy possesses the knowledge already, on the basis of the single act. That means that the repetition, the practice, is not necessary. He knows already now. Now why does Socrates do that? Does he adapt himself to Meno's laziness and sluggishness? Does he test Meno, meaning does he try to see whether Meno notices the transition from "the boy will know" to "the boy knows already"? Yes. Now let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Now if he always had it, he was always in a state of knowing; and if he acquired it at some time, he could not have acquired it in this life. Or has someone taught him geometry? You see, he can do the same as this with all geometry and every branch of knowledge. Now, can anyone have taught him all this? You ought surely to know, especially as he was born and bred in your house.

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[i] The Loeb continues "he now has."

> [MEN.] Well, I know that no one has ever taught him.
> [SOC.] And has he these opinions, or has he not?
> [MEN.] He must have them, Socrates, evidently.
> [SOC.] And if he did not acquire them in this present life, is it not obvious at once that he had them and learnt them during some other time?
> [MEN.] Apparently.
> [SOC.] And this must have been the time when he was not a human being?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] So if in both of these periods—when he was and was not a human being—he has had true opinions in him which have only to be awakened by questioning to become knowledge, his soul must have had this cognisance throughout all time? For clearly he has always either been or not been a human being.
> [MEN.] Evidently. (85d12-86a11)

LS: Yes. Now the opinions were always in the boy. He hasn't acquired them in his present life, as no one knows better than Meno. He must have acquired them before he was born. He must have acquired them; and that means they are not coeval with him, because in order to acquire something you have to be already. They are not coeval with him; they are not innate, because if they are innate then they are coeval with him. Before he was born, he had a soul; otherwise he couldn't have acquired them. But he was not yet a human being; he was a disembodied soul. In that state, he acquired knowledge. That means the knowledge was not always in him; he acquired it. Was there any need for practicing, or training and repetition in that prenatal acquisition? It is not said here, of course. But if not, there was no need for training and practicing in the prenatal state. Then training and practicing[4] [are] only a necessity for human beings, for embodied souls. And this may be due to the power of the body, which makes it necessary to be counteracted by training.[5] The best condition is the one in which no training is required, that of the disembodied soul, i.e., the condition for which our laziness longs, where we do not have to make any effort. Now let us look at Klein's commentary at a point on page 179. We'll read only a part of the third paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The alternative that the boy's soul must either have acquired knowledge at some time or always have had it turns out to be no alternative at all or, at least, a highly ambiguous one. As previously in the myth itself, the verb *manthanein*—

LS: "Learning."

Mr. Reinken:

> learning is again used ambiguously in the perfect tense. And to heighten the ambiguity, it is now explicitly intimated that the awakening of slumbering "true" (or "unforgotten") opinions through questioning may occur even in the prenatal past. Thus, the assumption that the boy acquired knowledge "at some time,"[ii] that

[ii] Klein gives the Greek: (*pote*). Klein, 179.

> is, at some time before his birth, is made ambiguously equivalent to the assumption that the boy's soul possesses that knowledge throughout all time.[iii]

LS: Now let us stop here. And now let us continue where we left off, in 86b1.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And if the truth of all things that are is always in our soul, then the soul must be immortal; so that you should take heart and, whatever you do not happen to know at present—that is, what you do not remember—you must endeavour to search out and recollect?
> [MEN.] You seem to me to speak well, Socrates, I know not how.
> [SOC.] And so do I to myself, Meno.[iv] (86b1-6)

LS: Let us stop here. So if the truth is always in our soul prior to our birth, that means however, strictly understood, that the knowledge was never acquired: because if it was acquired, then there was a stage in which the soul did not have the knowledge. Is this clear? So to repeat: If the truth is always in our soul, if knowledge was never acquired, our soul—note the singular—is coeval with the truth. And since the truth is always, our soul is immortal. And now we come to the practical conclusion: Hence, you, Meno, must have courage and attempt to recollect, i.e., you have no excuse anymore for your laziness and sluggishness. This was stated in a way already in the passage on recollection, 81c to d.[6] Since the soul is immortal—[he does not qualify it with an "if"]—and has seen everything, i.e., has learned everything, [then] the recollection of any one thing enables the soul to recover everything else.

Now let me see, there is another point in Klein's commentary which we might read. Yes, on page 180, the paragraph beginning "The point at which we find Socrates and Meno."[7]

Mr. Reinken:

> The point at which we find Socrates and Meno at this moment is the same that Socrates had reached when he was finishing telling, and commenting on, the myth of recollection. There is this difference, though: while in the original myth the identification of searching and learning with recollecting was derived from the undying nature of the soul, it now appears that the postulation of the latter *follows* from our ability to learn, an ability exhibited by the young slave and interpreted as the ability to recollect the truth "within" us.

LS: In other words, now the immortality of the soul is in a way proved, whereas in the previous case it was the premise. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> The final conclusion is the same in both cases: it is possible to search for the truth—

[iii] Klein gives the Greek: (*ton aei chronon*).
[iv] In original (Loeb edition): "[Men.] What you say commends itself to me, Socrates, I know not how. [Soc.] And so it does to me, Meno."

LS: For that truth.

Mr. Reinken:

> for that truth and, with special reference to Meno, one ought to make the effort to do so.
>
> Meno's reaction to what Socrates has just said is this: "I think you are right, Socrates, I know not how."[v] Socrates seconds him: "*I* think so *too*, Meno"—[vi]

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. Now Socrates seems then to have proven to Meno's satisfaction, by exhibiting the slave's recollecting, that the soul is immortal and hence that learning is possible. What is Meno going to do now? The excuse he had in his lazy *logos* has gone. Reminding ourselves of that passage on the recollection when Socrates set it forth for the first time, we observe that Socrates is now silent about the necessity of living now as piously as possible in order to become perhaps in the next life an outstanding man. You remember that crucial point. He is completely silent about any terrors of hell which might afflict the impious. In other words, there are no sanctions on learning or not learning. If Meno is eager to learn, he will learn; but if he is not eager he will not. Whether or not he believes in the immortality of the soul is irrelevant, especially since in the disembodied state of the soul there was no need for effort, for practice, for training. Yet Socrates goes beyond this. Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Most of the points I have made in support of my argument are not such as I can confidently assert; but that the belief in the duty of inquiring after what we do not know will make us better and braver and less helpless than the notion—

LS: "Less lazy." Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> lazy than the notion that there is not even a possibility of discovering what we do not know, nor any duty of inquiring after it—this is a point for which I am determined to do battle, so far as I am able, both in word and deed. (86b6-c2)

LS: Let us stop here. So Socrates now in a way even explicitly retracts the assertion of immortality. "I couldn't swear that that is true," "I couldn't fight for that." What remains is merely that by acting on the belief that we ought to seek or to inquire, we will become better and more masculine and less lazy than by acting on the belief that finding and seeking are impossible. There is no reward or punishment for our learning or not learning, except that we become better by learning. And [for] someone who doesn't think that that is not enough, one cannot do anything about it. But this contains a crucial implication:[8] [we would become better by learning]. This he would swear to, as it were. This he is willing to fight for, by deed and by speech.[9] One cannot know that one becomes better in this and this way if one does not know what is good. Ya, but what does

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[v] Klein gives the Greek: (*eu moi dokeis legein, ō Sōkrates, ouk oud'hopōs*).

[vi] Klein gives the Greek: (*kai gar egō emoi, o Menon*). Klein, 180.

it mean, then? Good for human beings. Socrates knows what virtue is; otherwise he could not make this statement. And hitherto, of course, he has not given [any indication as to what virtue is]. You remember at the beginning he even suggested he has not the slightest notion of what virtue is, which was not to be taken quite literally, but here he suggests that he knows it. Socrates knows this much, surely: that virtue is at least inseparable from knowledge. Otherwise he could not be so sure that by learning we would become better.

Now let us remember again the context. Is learning possible? Answer: yes, for the soul is immortal. And there are two[10] different conclusions which can be drawn from the immortality of the soul. One must live as piously as possible in order to become a great and just man, perhaps in the next incarnation. The other conclusion is that the immortality of the soul makes possible learning, i.e., recollection, and this means practically a need for a life dedicated to learning. These two alternatives, the pious life and the life dedicated to learning, are surely distinct. They may be ultimately identical, but this would need an argument. And this would of course be a notion very different from the common notion where we do not assume that a pious man is necessarily a man who has learned much. Meno is altogether unwilling to learn; this is a safe assumption. Now the natural thing for Socrates to do [would] be to exhort him to lead a pious or a just life. We have an example of that. At the beginning of the dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates exhorts the young Hippocrates to do something which is good for him. We expect therefore Socrates to exhort Meno to[11] act justly and piously. Why does Socrates not try to exhort Meno in the dialogue? Let us again compare him with that boy Hippocrates at the beginning of the *Protagoras*. Hippocrates does one thing which Meno never does: he blushes. Meno never blushes. The only way in which Meno could possibly be brought to a virtuous life would be by insight, by understanding—by calculation, even. And whether he is open to that is of course open to doubt. And this is the problem of Socrates's handling of Meno in the whole dialogue: What shall one do with such a man like Meno? You wanted to say something.

Student: I was wondering whether the statement that virtue is inseparable from knowledge which you [12][deduce] from that paragraph is quite as strong [as it appears], because while he does in one sense say that: If I seek knowledge I will become better, he does not say that it's a necessary condition, in that—

LS: No, but would it not be an inkling? That is true. There could conceivably be other ways.

Same Student: If one[13] seeks knowledge, one will become better. But that doesn't necessarily mean that to become better one must seek knowledge.

LS: In other words, it[14] would not even be a necessary condition, in your opinion?

Same Student: Well, I was just describing the paragraph.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: I was describing the paragraph.

LS: That is true. One can say that. But on the other hand, we have to consider the alternative suggested here within the dialogue, and the alternative suggested is a pious life and a life of learning. Now the pious life is dropped here tacitly, just as immortality of the soul is dropped to that extent that Socrates says he could not vouch for it. And therefore what remains is learning,[15] learning [which] mak[es] us better. This you would admit. But in the context, there is no alternative suggested, no alternative to learning which would make us better. Now if learning is necessary for making us better, then being good—virtue—would be something like knowledge. At the very least, knowledge would be an ingredient of virtue. Virtue may be more than knowledge (this question will come up again), but knowledge would be a necessary ingredient of it.

Same Student: Then you are suggesting that because other alternatives besides the pious life or the one of learning are not suggested, that therefore it is considered that those are exclusive. Is that it?

LS: Yes. That I would indeed say. But you can rightly say that doesn't bind us. Maybe there are alternatives. But what would be the alternatives?[16] For example, the notions of virtue which Meno sets forth. Do you think of them, for example, to be able to rule human being[s]? You don't mean that. What do you mean, for example?

Same Student: I'm not Socrates. [Laughter]

LS: No, I mean—but if you raise a question, something must be in your mind, and you must not be bashful, otherwise you will not learn. Do you mean, for example, a compassionate man? That is something which we do not acquire by learning. Is that something which you [have in mind], that a good man is a compassionate man, and we do not become compassionate by learning? There are many learned men who have no compassion, and many unlearned men who have compassion. Is that a possibility?

Same Student: It sounds like one. [Laughter]

LS: Yes. But then the question is: Can one not have compassion with the wrong kind of people? For example, you see a murderer or a potential murderer and his victim. Is it not better to have compassion with the potential victim than with a murderer? Does one not need therefore some discernment, some knowledge, some understanding? So in other words, can one be truly compassionate without knowledge? Is not knowledge an ingredient, a necessary ingredient of virtue? Surely virtue doesn't have to be identical with knowledge; that was never said here. But not more than that. And I believe that[17] much tougher examples [than compassion] are used by Socrates because Meno is not given to compassion; that doesn't make any impression on him. Socrates uses tougher examples. In that way Socrates tries to show him that even on the lowest level of a calculating rascal you must admit the necessity of knowledge, if he wants to be good at being a rascal. Yes?

Student: If Socrates is willing to grant that at some point the soul may have been, in Locke's phrase, a *tabula rasa*—that the ideas, knowledge, is not innate—then isn't it possible that even after the soul has entered the body we can learn more, so that all truth did not have to originally be there but that new truths can be learned after the soul has entered the body if they were not always in there?

LS: Ya, but then how would they come in it—I mean, how would they come into the soul? Then there would be possible the kind of learning or teaching which means just pouring in from the outside knowledge into the soul. And that is the premise: that is, that all teaching and all understanding means the activation of something which is in the soul. We'll take this up a little bit later when we raise the question which was already implied in what we read last time about the scene between Socrates and the slave: Does Socrates not just, as Klein put it, manipulate this boy, giving him the answers? And is this teaching? Is this teaching and, correspondingly, learning? Does not teaching rather mean to awaken something in the individual to be taught? Let us wait a bit and then we can take it up if you want. Now—yes?

Student: I'm not sure about the status of the fact that when Socrates makes statements like this, this type of statement as he does in other dialogues sometimes. It seems to be stated as if this is some sort of belief that Socrates has rather than the result of a number of rational arguments which he has given, as it also seems to be. And I'm wondering, what's the status of a statement like this.

LS: You mean in 86b? Is that it?

Same Student: No, the[18] passage that you just went through, that one should seek knowledge and that inquiring into things makes you better and braver and—

LS: Yes.[19] You mean to say that Socrates believes this and doesn't know it, is that it?

Same Student: Well, he says that he can confidently assert it; he says that it's a point which he is determined to do battle for.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: But he doesn't say: And this is the logic of a lot of other things I've been telling you.

LS: Ya, well, first of all let us forget the word "logical," because that might lead us into difficulties. What does it mean? You mean the necessary consequence of premises which one must grant? Is that what you mean by logical?

Same Student: Well,[20] maybe rational would be a better word. He seems to have the same type of argument that you gave for compassion, sort of a reduction that anything which is good or virtuous, you need knowledge for; and that gives you a requisite to

search for knowledge if you want to be a good person because all these things which you want eventually entail you having to have some sort of knowledge.

LS: Yes,[21] [but] he obviously makes a distinction between the immortality of the soul and our becoming better by learning, because for the first he couldn't vouch; for the second he can vouch. Now what does[22] his vouching mean? He can vouch, he can fight for it and will fight for it, not only by deed, which means by acting upon that, by living in this manner, but also by speech. So if someone says learning is absolutely irrelevant for virtue, or learning is bad or something of this kind, Socrates is sure that he can prove to this man that he's wrong. He hasn't given the proof here; it is not necessary because Meno didn't ask for a proof. Meno is open to the suggestion that learning is necessary for becoming a good man. I have explained this a bit last time, I think, at the beginning, when I reminded you of the fact which comes out only later in the dialogue, that he is not absolutely in agreement with his teacher and master, Gorgias,[23] who had said that there is no possibility of becoming virtuous by being taught. Meno wonders whether Protagoras might not be right—[Protagoras], who said one acquires virtue by being taught, by learning. So Meno is open to this possibility, and the question does not arise here. Don't forget that this[24] book is not a treatise, but it is a conversation between Socrates and an individual of a peculiar character (we have observed these characteristics to some extent), Meno; and you must know that from your own experiences in conversation[25] [that] the questions which arise and which do not arise, that depend[s] very much on the background of the people who converse. Is this not so? I mean therefore you will find very rarely a demonstration in a Platonic dialogue. You find some demonstration[s],[26] [such as] when Socrates talked to the slave boy. This was one. But it was of course not a hundred percent technically good demonstration, but it was, again, good enough for the purpose. The boy understood that. Yes?

Student: If Socrates uses the immortality of the soul argument to take away Meno's excuse for laziness, to say [that] you[27] have to try to recollect because the knowledge was in you from the beginning, then he says that he wouldn't be confident of everything he said in the argument. You said he retracts the part about the soul being immortal. Why does he say it and then retract it? I don't see the value of it.

LS: Yes. That is a very necessary question which you raise. But[28] we will have to take [it] up later on in a somewhat broader context. Perhaps what Socrates wanted to make clear—and that is a main point in Klein's commentary which convinced [me]—is a kind of equation. It's not a literal equation. [LS writes on the blackboard] Virtue. Knowledge. However one could—let me put a similarity sign on the board. Recollection. Ya? Vice, ignorance or indocility, and memory. We have seen from the very beginning that Meno is a memory man, and that is of course not a peculiarity of Meno. We all are most of the time memory people—I mean, repeating what we have heard from others and what made an impression on us. And this point is, so to say, the core of the dialogue. Whether this is sufficient for understanding the whole dialogue is another matter, for the very simple reason [that] we know one thing of Meno from the beginning: that he is, in the words of Klein again, an arch-villain. Now, as is proven by the fact that we, who are not arch-villains, are mostly memory, to be a memory man[29] may be one reason but it's surely not

a sufficient reason for being an arch-villain. And therefore[30] we will have to open and read through that pretty soon. But this is of great importance, and we will see later on when we can[31] [review] the dialogue as a whole—[and] you will be so good as to repeat that question.

Mr. Reinken: May I ask a paradox, after you sit down? I see a paradox in this word for arch-villain, *panourgos*, which[32] [translates literally as] a man ready for everything.[33] Yet Meno's public appearance, we know from history, is [of] a man who is ready for everything. You've uncovered his secret: that he's a lazy man.

LS: Intellectually [lazy]. Ya, well, what does lazy mean?

Mr. Reinken: So that pun is not quite fine.

LS: No, that is a very simple thing. He is lazy in the most important respect: he does not wish to think.[34] And the attraction of wealth and power is so great, and he will bend every effort to get wealth and power,[35][for which] he will undergo many sleepless nights. In this respect, he is not lazy at all, but in the decisive respect he is lazy. He never questions his end, his values, as they say: wealth and power. And that is of course laziness, is it not?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: So there is no difficulty in this point, is there? Mr. Malbin.

Mr. Malbin: [On page] 302,[vii] Socrates says that since "the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything." Therefore it would seem that you would have to have gone through a complete cycle of having lived as an embodied soul, having lived with a disembodied soul, and then in repetition with the [em]bodied soul, you would then have knowledge of everything.

LS: Ya, well, what is here not spelled out in this very fragmentary and extremely brief statement of the so-called myth is that the entry into the body means oblivion, [36]but in such a way that knowledge remains, becomes now dormant knowledge, potential knowledge. And it becomes actual only by being questioned and by making the effort. This is[37] a very brief statement, and a very fragmentary statement in every respect of the recollection story. And they are much more elaborate in other dialogues.

Mr. Malbin: But at least it seems that in order for the disembodied soul to be aware of everything, it must have had some previous contact with material things.

LS: With what?

Mr. Malbin: With matter, or with life.

[vii] In the Loeb edition.

LS: No,[38] in a way that is another difficulty of that story.[39] In the disembodied state it didn't have sense organs, for example,[40] yet [it] is supposed to have seen everything. This is another sign, if we still need further signs, that this story as told is open to many great objections.

Mr. Malbin: But that's not the sense—

LS: That's not what you mean.

Mr. Malbin: [41][Socrates says] that since it is immortal, [it] has beheld all things in this world and the nether realms. Would[42] [this] mean that while it was disembodied it beheld all things in this world and the nether realm, or—

LS: Ya. Obviously.[43] Look, I mean, what could a man see in this present life, especially at a time where there were no air travels available as there are now? He could have seen certain things in Athens and, well, in Sicily or wherever they went for trade or fighting. He didn't see anything in India, of which they knew somehow, or in the more central parts of Persia.[44] And now in this disembodied state he has seen everything on earth, everything on earth, also in the lowest part of Egypt, for example, to which no Greek was likely to come.

Mr. Malbin: I'm confused. Well, the way it's stated is that there are three parts. First, since "the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms," it seems that from the point of view of the myth you can cut out the part about it "has been born many times."

LS: No, that is important, because[45] what is important for the myth is the ambiguity as to whether the soul is immortal or not.[46] Let me begin at the beginning. The things, the opinions, the true opinions are in the soul. And the question arises: How do they come into the soul? They could not have come into the soul during the present life. Hence there must have been[47] a state in which, say, you were not yet a human being, i.e., [you] were not yet in your body. There must be a prenatal state of the disembodied soul. And the question is, then: Was the knowledge coeval with the immortal soul, or was it acquired prior to that?[48] That is the alternative, which is crucial. Was it acquired, or was it coeval?[49] But if it is immortal, then there must have been—what is the necessity for that, [that] there were many incarnations, many embodiments? This indeed is not necessary, at least as I said a moment ago. Mr. Schaefer, do you—

Mr. Schaefer: On the basis of what we now know, can we say anything about what the things in the nether realm will be? What else would there be, other than knowledge, which is presumably knowledge of the things of this world?

LS: I fail to follow you.

Mr. Schaefer:[50] Well, Socrates says it beholds all things "both in this world and in the nether realms." Now do you interpret that to mean it beholds all things while immortal and they are the things both of this world and of the nether realms?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Schaefer: Now what would the things of the nether realm be?

LS: Hades, especially its terrors; and therefore it can also remember these terrors, and[51] these can induce it to lead a just life. Think of Cephalus at the beginning of the *Republic*.

Mr. Schaefer: I was wondering whether there is any non-mythic counterpart?

LS: Ya. You see, the myth is very brief; and it is discarded very soon, as we have seen. And the myth gives rise to many, many questions and it is rich in difficulties. That is obvious, and that both of you made clear. The question therefore is: Why was it introduced at all? That was this young lady's question.[52] And I have given a provisional answer in order to make clear this fundamental distinction between memory, ordinary memory of what we have heard, and recollection, which is the mythical expression—if I may use the word "mythical" for a moment—of genuine learning. Yes, Mr. Malbin?

Mr. Malbin: The question which I was trying to lead to from this, which you probably would want to postpone, but[53] [if] you've just dropped the idea[s] of [immortality and] many births as unnecessary, but [if] at least some prenatal connection with knowledge both physical and unphysical, let us say, or physical world and the nether realms, is necessary for a person to have full recollection now—

LS: Potentially. Since this all hangs together, he can by recollecting one thing be led to recollecting everything.[54] What Socrates doesn't say here, for example, which is crucial [and] which is made clear in the *Meno*, is that the recollection is started in a way by our sense perception. That is completely dropped here.

Mr. Malbin: It would seem that if you dropped immortality[55] and just say that everything is connected and the soul is somehow aware of all the connections and dormantly knows everything, it would seem that at least the first step would have to be not one of recollection. At least the first step would have to be one of actual learning, to start with, to make all the connections.

LS: Ya, but[56] that is a question, whether sense perception and its immediate accompaniments are learning. I mean, for example, when Socrates draws a figure in the sand and [asks]: Is this a triangle? Is this an act of learning? Is not the act of learning[57] about the geometrical proposition which is developed in the sequel? So I suggest that we go now on in the discussion.

Now we have now received a provisional answer to the question: What are the lessons which Socrates draws when speaking to Meno, from the slave scene? But we must also

consider the question: What are the lessons which *we* must draw from the slave scene by having observed it, by thinking about it? Did Socrates prove that learning is recollection by this exhibition? Did he not manipulate the slave's answers? This was the question we raised at the beginning of the last session to which we have to turn now. Now let us[58] look up a few passages. Here we have to follow Klein very well. On page 103: now[59] let us read only the second paragraph and the end of the third. Let me read it. I mean, if one looks at the thing superficially one can: "It can, therefore, be justly said that Socrates puts the answers into the boy's 'mouth.' Does he put them into the boy's 'mind'?" And now he gives a kind of statistics of the answers of the boy and the conclusion is this, at the end of the following paragraph: "To decide, then, whether Socrates puts the answers 'into the boy's mind,' or, in other words, whether he 'manipulates' the boy's opinions, means to gauge the significance of the boy's 'yes' and 'no.' Because his answers are chiefly 'yes' and no.'"[viii]

Are these "yes" or "no" [answers] put into his mind by Socrates, or only the alternatives [that] it must be either so and so, [and] which of the two? Then the alternative is of course Socrates's suggestion. But the "yes" or "no" would be the boy's answer. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> Disregarding for a moment the possibility of our being perplexed, what makes us choose the answer "yes" or the answer "no" in the case of a question that confronts us with nothing but this alternative? Do we actually have a choice in this matter? We do, but this choice is not between the "yes" and the "no," but between two possible ways of arriving at the answer.
>
> We [may] make our answer depend on something not related to what the question is about, as, for instance, our desire to please or to harm other people, on the urge to satisfy our vanity, on the pursuit of some cherished plans, or simply, and most frequently, on what we have heard other people say, persuasively or even casually. And this way may be chosen, whether the question concerns itself with what *happened* to us or around us in the past up to the present moment or with our *thoughts* on any possible subject.
>
> On the other hand, we may make our answer depend uniquely on the matter that the question is concerned with. If the question is about *events* involving us in some manner, we would try to give, as we say, a "truthful" account of them, regardless of the subsequent effects this accounting may have. If the question asks what we think about a given subject, we would try to find and to state what seems necessarily inherent in, or connected with, that subject. It is this kind of question that both the slave and Meno have to answer.
>
> But how can we possibly find the necessity inherent in, or connected with, a given subject matter except through and in our thinking[ix] about it? The choice we have, so far as our answering is concerned, is thus the choice of submitting or

[viii] Klein, 103.

[ix] Klein gives the Greek: (*dianoeisthai*).

> of not submitting ourselves to the necessity revealed by our thinking. It is the only necessity that it is in our power to submit or not to submit to.[x]

LS: Ya. What does he mean by that point? Obviously he means that there are necessities where it is not in our power to submit or not to submit; otherwise it wouldn't make sense. Well, what is an example of such a necessity, where it is not in our power to submit or not to submit?

Mr. Reinken: The need for food.

Student: The doctor strikes your knee.

LS: Ya. Perhaps the simplest example would be dying.[60] We cannot avoid that, because even if a man commits suicide he submits to that necessity in a somewhat indirect way. Now Plato makes the distinction between various kinds of necessities in two passages to which I would like to draw your attention. One, in the *Republic*, 458d, where he says: Is not what I say a necessary consequence? (I read to you the translation here.) That is what Socrates says there: "Not by the necessities of geometry," that are the necessities of thinking, "but by those of love, which are perhaps keener and more potent than the other to persuade and constrain the multitude." The erotic necessities are ones to which at least the multitude does not have the power to submit or not to submit to. Another passage is in the first book of Plato's *Laws*, 644d, following:

> [Ath. Stranger] Let us suppose that each of us living beings[xi] is an ingenious puppet of the gods, whether contrived by way of a toy of theirs or for some serious purpose—for as to that we know nothing; but this we do know, that these inward affections of ours [passions—LS] like sinews or cords, drag us along and, being opposed to each other, pull one against the other to opposite actions; and herein lies the dividing line between goodness and badness [between virtue and vice—LS]. For, as our logos declares, there is one of those pulling forces which every man should always follow and nohow leave hold of, counteracting thereby the pull of the other sinews: it is the leading-string, golden and holy, of reasoning,[xii] entitled the law of the city;[xiii] and whereas the other cords are hard and steely and of every possible shape and semblance, this one is flexible and uniform, since it is of gold. With that most excellent leading-string of the law we must needs co-operate always; for since reasoning[xiv] is excellent, but gentle rather than forceful, its leading-string needs helpers to insure that the golden kind within us may vanquish the other kinds.

What he calls here "gentle rather than forceful" is what Klein means [by] "it is in our power to submit or not to submit." What we ordinarily call necessities are not *gentle*

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[x] Klein, 103-04.
[xi] In original Loeb: "creatures"
[xii] In original Loeb: "of calculation."
[xiii] In original Loeb: "public law of the State."
[xiv] In original Loeb: "calculation."

necessities; we are not free to avoid them. Whether that is ultimately a necessity, whether these necessities are in the last resort necessities or not is a question which is not prejudged by this statement, because otherwise we would be led to these questions: May not those other necessities take away our freedom to think or not to think? These coercions: there are maybe situations in which people are not free to speak their mind; I believe that is not a far-fetched suggestion.[61] But one can rightly say that [this passage in the *Laws*] leaves the freedom of thinking intact. But is this true? For how long? As far as the thinking of forbidden thoughts is concerned? Here there lies a difficulty: to what extent the human mind[62] [is] free to submit or not to submit under certain conditions which were quite frequent in the past. I mention this only in passing.

Now let us go on in Klein's discussion. Number 4 on page 104.

Mr. Reinken:

> The two ways of answering are two ways of arriving at an "opinion."[xv] We may confirm or deny the "proposition" contained in the question and thereby utter an opinion, for "extraneous" reasons, especially by "repeating" what other people say, as we do most of the time. Or we may assent to, or reject, that "proposition" by drawing the assent or the denial from ourselves. Such assent to, or rejection of, a proposition such [speaking] or [nay-speaking]— [xvi]

LS: No, "such assent or dissent."

Mr. Reinken:

> such assent or dissent, constitutes an opinion of a different kind. It cannot be "induced" or "manipulated" because its source is not "outside" the person who holds it. It is the completion of our own thinking[xvii] on a given subject.
>
> Has the boy followed the first or the second way? Did he answer somewhat haphazardly or perhaps with the purpose of pleasing Socrates? Or did we not rather have the opportunity to observe that *what* the boy (either falsely or correctly) assented to or rejected came from nobody else but Socrates, but that the *assent* and the *rejection* came from nobody but the boy himself? His "yes" and his "no" indicated what *he* held to be true or untrue: they represented his opinions no less than the arithmetical answers represented the results of *his* counting and reckoning.
>
> We had the opportunity to observe this inasmuch as we, within ourselves, kept confirming, or disapproving of, the boy's answers and opinions. Socrates' marginal pedagogical remark can indeed be understood as aimed no less at Meno and at us than as aimed at the boy.

LS: Now this "marginal pedagogical remark" is "Tell us what *you* think."

[xv] Klein gives the Greek: (*doxa*).

[xvi] Klein gives only the Greek: "*phasis* or *apophasis*." Mr. Reinken attempts to give a translation of these terms, but Strauss suggests a better one.

[xvii] Klein gives the Greek: (*dianoias apoteleutēsis*).

Mr. Reinken:

> Had not Meno as well as we, the readers and listeners, been warned from the outset to pay close attention to the coming exchange?
>
> Socrates' questions solicit and elicit—in this episode of the young slave no more than elsewhere—both false and correct answers.[xviii]

LS: In other words, there were not merely true opinions in the boy, as we observed ourselves. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Indeed, Socrates' maieutic art—"

LS: "Maieutic" means the art of a midwife, Socrates's art of midwifery.

Mr. Reinken:

> midwifery art, as we infer from what he says in the *Theaetetus*,[xix] is more likely to make young men deliver "nonsense"[xx] and "wind eggs"[xxi] than to make them deliver something "genuine and true."[xxii] But to submit oneself to refutation without getting angry and feeling disgraced is the first and indispensable step in the process of "giving birth" to something true, that is to say, in the process of learning.[xxiii]

LS: Yes, you see this point is of some immediate importance to every student and also to every professor: "without getting angry and feeling disgraced." One must overcome these great handicaps, which are almost inevitable and very strong, in order to learn something. One must be good. Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> Facing the figures drawn before him on the dusty surface of the earth and listening to Socrates' provocative questions, the young slave twice succumbs to a kind of superficial plausibility not unlike the one which characterizes the "familiar" notions irrevocably committed to, and marked on, Meno's memory. Having been refuted, the boy reaches the stage of complete perplexity without feeling disgraced and ridiculed, and the subsequent questions of Socrates help him to 'see' the truth about the lines drawn by his "teacher," help him—

LS: "Teacher" here in quotation marks.

Mr. Reinken:

[xviii] Klein, 104-05.
[xix] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers in the *Theaetetus*: (150 bff., 210 bff.).
[xx] Ibid., (151c7)
[xxi] Ibid., (151e6; 210 b9).
[xxii] Ibid., (150c3).
[xxiii] Klein, 105.

> help him, in other words, to submit *himself* to reasons compelling him to accept that truth. A great deal, then, must depend not only on the quality of the teacher but also on the quality of the learner.

LS: Here now he uses teacher and learner without quotation marks. In other words, speaking seriously, there *is* teaching and learning. The only question is whether most of the teaching and most of the learning going on deserves that name. And it might perhaps be good (although we have not very much time) to read the next paragraph, because Klein illustrates it there.

Mr. Reinken: "Socrates' role—"

LS: This is a great question not only in departments of education, and not only for teachers, but for every human being: What does it mean to learn? Now let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> Socrates' role in this exchange of questions and answers is to provide the condition under which the boy's learning can be take place. The "teacher" is not primarily *responsible*[xxiv] for the pupil's learning; this responsibility is the pupil's own.

LS: No spoonfeeding possible here.

Mr. Reinken:

> But *without* the "teacher's" lead the pupil would not have the opportunity to assume that responsibility. The crucial distinction made in the *Phaedo* is directly applicable to the pupil-teacher relationship: "One thing is what is truly *responsible* [for something], another thing is that without which what is responsible could not possibly become [effectively] responsible."*[xxv] To be unable to make that distinction is a sign of "profound sluggishness" in speaking and thinking.[xxvi] If there be "teaching" and "learning," their relationship could not be simply a "causal" one. Teaching does not consist in speaking and insisting, learning not in listening and repeating. The contrary view—it need hardly be said that this is also Meno's view—is the prevailing one at all times and not easy to correct.[xxvii]

LS: Now what Klein means here by a causal relation can perhaps be best illustrated by stimulus and response: that here is a stimulating teacher, who[63] of course [produces] a response—let's hope, at least—and that is it.[64] [Due to the persistence of this theory], the peculiar nature of teaching and learning is misunderstood, and the Socratic story about

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[xxiv] Klein gives the Greek: (*aitios*).
[xxv] Klein gives the Greek: (*allo men ti esti to aition tōi onti, allo de ekeino aneu hou to aition ouk an pot' eiē aition*).
[xxvi] Ibid (*pollē . . . kai makra rhathymia . . . tou logou*).
[xxvii] Klein, 105-06.

that, about making a man recollect, while not being literally true is much truer than the stimulus-response method. Let us leave it at this point.

Now as you'll see when you turn the page around, there is a long digression on recollection and memory which we will skip for the time being. We shall take up this digression when we have completed the study of the *Meno* itself and as a whole, and then we'll have a better possibility to judge what this digression suggests. Now let us then continue where we left off in 86c3. Meno has agreed, as we know,[65] [that] learning is possible, as proven by the slave scene. And what does Meno now do?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] There also I consider that you speak aright, Socrates.
> [SOC.] Then since we are of one mind as to the duty of inquiring into what—"

LS: Duty . . . That has so many connotations, Kantian and non-Kantian, which[66] are not there. "That one ought" would perhaps be slightly better.

Mr. Reinken:

> Then since we are of one mind that one ought to inquire into what one does not know, do you agree to our attempting a joint inquiry into the nature of virtue?

LS: No, "to find what then virtue is."

Mr. Reinken: All right.

> [MEN.] By all means. But still, Socrates, for my part I would like best of all to examine that question I asked at first. And hear your view as to whether in pursuing it we are to regard it as a thing to be taught, or as a gift of nature to mankind, or as arriving to them in some other way which I should be glad to know. (86c3-d2)

LS: Yes. He would like to consider, to look at—*skepsaimen*, from which the word[67] *skopein*, looking, and also [the word] *skepsis* is derived. "And I would like to hear." So he is now willing to some extent to look at things, but he is equally willing again, as he was throughout his life, just to hear. Meno has no objection to Socrates's conclusion; we have seen that, except that he is not greatly interested in finding out what virtue is. That is clear. But he is very eager to investigate or rather to hear, as he was from the very beginning, how virtue is acquired. He knows what virtue is, but how is it acquired? He replaces his initial question. What does he change? Did some one[68] [of] you notice it?

Mr. Bruell: He leaves out exercise.

LS: Training, practice, yes. Now, is he fully responsible for that? He was perhaps induced to do so by the ambiguity of Socrates's teaching regarding recollection. Maybe we acquire that original teaching in the prenatal state or states without any effort, without any practice. This is the second change which Meno undergoes through Socrates's action,

the first having been that he abandoned Gorgias's authority when he gave his third answer to the question of what virtue is.

Now Meno is interested in how virtue is acquired because he believes to know what virtue is. While his answers prove to be defective,[69] this is a relatively superficial event; basically he knows what he wants and what virtue is. His opinion of virtue reveals itself sufficiently in his three answers. If you take these three answers together and disregard the slight complication when Socrates brings up justice in addition— "Oh yes," Meno grants immediately, but [70]it doesn't play any role for him. So the situation is only slightly complicated by the necessity in which he finds himself, to pay lip-service to justice, of which everyone ordinarily speaks; and it would be awkward to say[71] [that] justice is not a virtue, [or at least] a part of virtue. So since he knows what virtue is, in his way of knowing, the only question of interest is: How is virtue acquired? Does one need learning or teaching regarding virtue, or not? Does one need hearing in particular, say, lectures about virtue? Is this perhaps not the way to become virtuous? It is surely much easier [to listen to speeches about virtue][72]—especially if the lectures are interspersed with jokes and other things—than to practice it.

At this point I believe we should provisionally consider Klein's analysis of the present situation without going into this long digression. Meno has not learned the lesson following from the doctrine of recollection, that is clear, because otherwise he would not make this scene and would say: Yes, let us find out what virtue is—whereas the slave has learned his lesson. Meno is thus shown to us to be inferior to his slave. But Meno is unaware of this, because he is a free man and[73] [the slave] is his slave;[74] even if this slave would show [himself to] have some superiority in some insignificant respect, that's unimportant. The question is: Is the slave aware of his superiority to Meno? That is of course impossible to say; he might be so modest that the thought that he could be superior to his master would never occur to him. Meno is unable to learn. He acts on his lazy logos. Learning [is] equal to recollection, we have seen. Meno is unable to recollect, but he remembers, as we have seen in so many cases: he remembers what Gorgias said, and what the poet said, and so on,[75] so that Meno is, we can simply say, a memory man. [But] is this sufficient as an explanation?

Let us have a provisional discussion of this question. Let us look a bit more closely at Meno's memory. Is it simply that he is a good rememberer? We can say no, because his memory is obviously selective. He remembers some things but he doesn't remember others. He does not remember justice, for example, spontaneously, as he remembers the more or less unjust opinions about justice. There are many other people who are unable to learn, who depend entirely for their orientation on what they hear. Nowadays the term other-oriented—?

Mr. Reinken: Other-directed.[xxviii]

LS: Other-directed. And quite a few of them are of course not villains, as Meno is. They can be very nice people, and they are not necessarily less intelligent than Meno. Think of

[xxviii] David Riesman et al., *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

the case of Cephalus in the *Republic*, at the beginning—you remember that scene? The very respectable nice old man whom everyone would wish to have as his grandfather. I don't mean that because he is a wealthy man [laughter] but because he is such a nice man. And he is wholly unable to learn. At the moment that the learning, the investigation, starts, he leaves, never to return. He is a man of simple piety. But that also means he depends on the stories told. That is[76] made quite clear at the beginning of the *Republic*. He remembers. Now Meno is of course in a different case. Meno comes in the first place from Thessaly, from a very rough[77] country of violence and noted for viciousness of all kinds. So they did not have any education to speak of. And in addition, Gorgias came there, and Gorgias was not a man from whom you would learn high moral principles. Meno is characterized by an inability to learn plus bad upbringing, and that you cannot say of Cephalus, for example.

Now what about Gorgias himself? Gorgias is not an arch-villain. He is redeemed in a manner by the fact that he possesses an art, the art of rhetoric. Meno, on the other hand, possesses no art, I mean except for a superficial acquaintance with geometry or so. Or let us look at Gorgias's other follower in the *Gorgias*, in the dialogue called *Gorgias*: Callicles. Callicles teaches rather terrible things. Callicles denies that justice as it is ordinarily understood is of any value; and yet you can see, when you look at him and treat his speeches carefully, he has a generous nature. And the motivation for his nasty views is a very generous one: he is indignant about the fate of the just man in the city, say, like Athens. A man like Socrates would be a good example, who cannot take care of himself against his enemies; and therefore it seems to him the most important thing for a decent man [is] that he be able to take care of himself.[78] And [although] this seems to be an innocent step, [it] is of course crucial, because if this is the most important thing, then all other considerations are thrown overboard. And therefore he arrives at the conclusion that justice is of no account, but his motivation is respectable. In addition, he, Callicles, like Socrates is explicitly described as an erotic man. Now erotic man does not of course mean sexed or oversexed, but it means fundamentally love of the beautiful, of which love of beautiful human beings is indeed the most important[79] specification but not the only one. So Meno lacks all these qualities. He has neither a *technē* nor has he a good upbringing, nor does he possess a generous nature. Meno lacks the sense for the beautiful or the noble or fine completely. Therefore we would have to prove that these things which I mentioned, especially the sense of the beautiful, is something which cannot be connected with memory, which cannot be rooted in memory.

Let me state it somewhat more precisely on the basis of what Klein develops in his digression, and there he finds ultimately this formula: Meno is the exemplar of the shallow man, of the man without any depth; and therefore he is a memory man in the most radical sense. Now this would of course imply that such things as a sense for the beautiful would mean to have some depth, and which depth would then be developed to its highest pitch by a proper cultivation of the mind. So this is the point which we will try to make clear while we go. But ultimately we will be able to judge of this interpretation only[80] when we have understood the whole action of the dialogue from the beginning to the end, and then it will be our task to integrate this point which Klein made, partly in the passages we have read and partly in the digression which I hope we can still discuss, into

the action of the dialogue as a whole. And this question, this action of the dialogue as a whole, can formally be described in these terms. Socrates, either knowing[81] from the beginning or finding[82] out very soon that Meno can never[83] learn and can never become better by learning in any precise sense, is confronted with the question: What to do with such a fellow? Must one leave him entirely to his own devices? Is there no advice which one could possibly give him in order not to lead a completely useless and perhaps even a completely harmful life, or is there[84] some possibility of a good deed on the part of a fellow like Meno? This is in my opinion the action of the second half of the dialogue, and that is linked up with quite a few other considerations. And we will take this up next time[85]. Now, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one thing. When you say that Gorgias is redeemed by his knowledge of rhetoric, would he be equally well redeemed if he were simply a pottery maker or a shoemaker?

LS: No, you must not forget that the art of speaking has something to do with the beautiful. Ya? I mean from a very high level, you can say it is the art of making beautiful phrases. But that is only possible from a very high level. Being considerate as to how one says what one says, to be careful in this respect is something praiseworthy, laudable in itself. Would you not admit that? I mean, just as, say, to wash and to be reasonably clean is better than the opposite. Although there are crooks who are very clean, it is better to take one's speech seriously. That you learn from a rhetorician.

Mr. Butterworth: The only problem is that there's the whole argument that the *Gorgias* brings up, rhetoric can also be used for evil.

LS: I know that, just as the other example which I just gave.[86] Surely, therefore, rhetoric can under no circumstances be the master art, as Gorgias seems to claim. Rhetoric must be controlled by the master art. That would presumably be philosophy. But in itself the art is[87] [still] an art, as comes out—of course that is not explicitly stated in the larger part of the *Gorgias*, but if you remember the dialogue, it comes out later on, toward the end of the dialogue. There was someone else. Yes. This will be the last one.

Student: Meno still suspects that he is somehow virtuous.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Meno somehow suspects that he is virtuous.

LS: Oh, I think he is rather sure of it. Yes, as I see him he has only this disturbing, slightly disturbing thought: he has heard that in order to become virtuous in the most exacting sense one must have been trained by a man like Protagoras, let us say. I mean, after all, he knows that he comes from Thessaly, and Thessaly was not supposed to be a breeding place for the finest men. That he knows. And Protagoras had this reputation based chiefly on his promotional speeches that he can produce the finest kind of men; and therefore he is a bit worried about that, whether he should not do something in the form

of listening to speeches about virtue in order to become perfectly good. And that is his problem, and I think that it is this problem which induces him to talk to Socrates and that is in a way the overall action of the dialogue. Only[88] [it turns out that it] is not so easy to extract an answer from Socrates, you know? Like people who call a man up over the telephone: "What do you think about Vietnam?" And either you say it, or you say: "No comment." But it doesn't work here, and therefore it becomes more complicated, much more complicated than he had expected.

Same Student: About this practice of virtue: Would not some kind of practice of virtue, i.e., practice in what seems most important to him, getting power, would not that—

LS: Ya,[89] I mean, that he does anyway. This kind of effort he doesn't shun at all. We discussed this before. So let us discuss it next time.

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[1] Deleted "is." Moved "four square feet."
[2] Deleted "first…we began."
[3] Deleted "this"
[4] Deleted "is."
[5] Deleted "But this would apply of course also—."
[6] Changed from "Since the soul is immortal, it was said there, not "if"—since the soul is immortal and has seen everything, i.e., has learned everything, the recollection of any one thing enables the soul to recover everything else."
[7] Deleted "180."
[8] Deleted "this." Moved "statement of Socrates."
[9] Deleted "that we would become better by learning"
[10] Deleted "conclusions."
[11] Deleted "do…to."
[12] Deleted "deduct"
[13] Deleted "is knowledgeable…one."
[14] Deleted "could be…it."
[15] Changed from "And learning leading up to…learning making us better."
[16] Deleted "That some people are, well."
[17] Deleted "in a different way, not taking compassion as an example."
[18] Deleted "one…the."
[19] Deleted "Now…well, as stated here…Yes, what does he say? That…"
[20] Deleted "I mean the type of…."
[21] Deleted "now what Socrates…."
[22] Deleted "…I mean, what does."
[23] Changed from "And Gorgias who had said that there is no possibility of becoming virtuous by being taught—he is…Meno wonders whether Protagoras might not be right, who said one acquires virtue by being taught, by learning.
[24] Deleted "is not a treatise, you know? This."
[25] Deleted "what…."
[26] Deleted "he had, when he…."
[27] Deleted "don't…you."
[28] Deleted "perhaps." Moved "…this point."
[29] Deleted "is not."
[30] Deleted "this book."
[31] Deleted "overlook."
[32] Deleted "goes over to."
[33] Changed from "Yet Meno…though Meno's public appearance, we know from history, is a man who is ready for everything, you've uncovered…his secret is that he's a lazy man."
[34] Deleted "He is…."

[35] Deleted ". In this respect…."
[36] Deleted "but oblivion of course."
[37] Deleted "not…that is."
[38] Deleted "it sees…."
[39] Deleted "It has…."
[40] Moved "it."
[41] Changed from ":…that since it has beheld all things, or since it is immortal and has beheld all things in this world and the nether realms."
[42] Deleted "you."
[43] Deleted "Because in this…."
[44] Deleted "So."
[45] Deleted "otherwise this question, I mean."
[46] Deleted "If it is immortal or not." Deleted "Now if it is immortal, then…now let us start from…."
[47] Deleted "something…."
[48] Deleted "This is…."
[49] Changed from "And if it was…but if it is immortal, then there must have been…why is the necessity for that?"
[50] Deleted "Well, in other words if you say that…."
[51] Deleted "can...."
[52] Changed from ". And which is…I have given a provisional answer because of the connection…in order to make clear this fundamental distinction between memory, ordinary memory of what we have heard, and recollection, which is...which is the mythical expression—if I may use the word "mythical" for a moment—of genuine learning."
[53] Deleted "it was if this immortality is something that is dropped and if in the myth the immortality is…if immortality, and."
[54] Changed from "What Plato does…what Socrates doesn't say here, for example, is…one incident which is crucial is what is made clear in the Meno is that the recollection is started in a way by our sense perception."
[55] Deleted "that...."
[56] Deleted "the question is…."
[57] Deleted "that."
[58] Deleted "see…."
[59] Deleted "we don't have…."
[60] Deleted "Although one…yes."
[61] Deleted "Now…."
[62] Deleted "…that we are."
[63] Deleted "…and then there is."
[64] Deleted "That is."
[65] Deleted "has agreed."
[66] Deleted "should…."
[67] Deleted "… which is connected with the word."
[68] Deleted "of."
[69] Deleted "but."
[70] Deleted "he doesn't play any"
[71] Deleted "virtue…."
[72] Deleted "than."
[73] Deleted "that."
[74] Changed from "I mean…Even if this slave would show…have some superiority in some insignificant respect, that's unimportant."
[75] Deleted "Now but the question…."
[76] Deleted "quite…."
[77] Deleted "and."
[78] Changed from "And once he has made this seems to be an innocent step, but it is of course crucial."
[79] Deleted "…[inaudible word] the most important."
[80] Deleted "by…."
[81] Deleted "it."

[82] Deleted "it."
[83] Deleted "acquire…can never."
[84] Deleted "a…is there."
[85] Deleted "…begin it for next time, rather."
[86] Deleted "Everything…."
[87] Deleted "…it is."
[88] Deleted "Socrates…it is not so easy…."
[89] Deleted "no, that is…He would not…."

Session 9: no date

Leo Strauss: Now we[1] must now consider the aftermath of the scene with the slave. But let me remind you again of the context. Meno is eager to find out how virtue is acquired, that is to say, whether Gorgias is not wrong in asserting that virtue cannot be taught. Socrates compels Meno to say what is virtue according to Gorgias. Meno gives three answers but he always forgets about justice, just as Gorgias did in the Platonic dialogue *Gorgias*. The last answer of Meno is however no longer Gorgian. The central answer gave occasion for bringing out the difference between the two kinds of definitions, which we may call scientific and philosophic. After Meno's arsenal of answers is exhausted, he is paralyzed; and in justification of his paralysis, he not only attacks Socrates as a man who might get into troubles but he presents his lazy *logos*: learning is impossible. To which Socrates replies by stating his holy *logos*, the teaching of the immortality of the soul, which implies two possible practical conclusions: to live piously and learningly (if this adverb is permissible). How the two things are related, whether they are not ultimately identical, is in no way stated and everyone must figure that out by himself. But the emphasis is surely on learning as distinguished from piety, and learning is understood as recollection. Socrates proves to Meno that learning is recollection by exhibiting the slave's learning a geometric proposition. Meno is now supposed to make another effort to say what virtue is. We have read this passage, but we should read it again lest we do not remember it. 86c7.

Mr. Reinken:[2]

> [MEN.] By all means. But still, Socrates, for my part I would like best of all to examine that question I asked at first, and hear your view—

LS: No, no. "I would like to look at, to observe, and to hear." That is not is not clear in his mind, whether a mere answer of Socrates would [not] satisfy him. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> and hear your view as to whether in pursuing it we are to regard it as a thing to be taught, or as a gift of nature to mankind, or as arriving to them in some other way which I should be glad to know. (86c7-d2)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here.[3] So this is Meno's reaction, and Klein points out that it shows a complete lack of understanding on the part of Meno. But we must be somewhat more indulgent or fair to Meno. This reaction does not simply mean that Meno has not understood anything, for the slave scene precisely showed that one can solve problems without raising the question "what is?" And above all, the same scene showed that the answerer needs [4][to be] guided by the questioner, and Meno can expect that what Socrates did to the slave he would do to the master, namely, lead him up to an answer, a sufficient answer to the question of what virtue is,[5] [by] making him recollect. Good. Now let us read the sequel there.

Mr. Reinken: "Had I control over you, Meno, as over myself—"

LS: Yes, all right.

Mr. Reinken:

> we should not have begun considering whether virtue can or cannot be taught until we had first inquired into the main question of what it is. But as you do not so much as attempt to control yourself—you are so fond of your liberty—

LS: "In order to be free."

Mr. Reinken: Ah, in order to be—"control yourself—in order to be free—"

LS: No, I mean you abstain from controlling yourself so that you are free, because controlling yourself would be incompatible with freedom. That's a very common notion, as you know. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> in order to be free—and both attempt and hold control over me, I will yield to your request—what else am I to do? So it seems we are to consider what sort of thing it is of which we do not yet know what it is! (86d3-e1)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. That was the same difficulty we had before, remember? How can you know how a thing is, whether it is good or bad or beautiful or ugly, if you do not know what it is? This word which[6] the translator renders by "controlling" means more simply "ruling." If you rule, you wish to rule me, i.e., you wish to be my master. And then you don't even try to rule yourself—which is more easily intelligible when speaking of self-control, but it is the same word. Now if I control you as I control myself, we would first investigate what virtue is. But as it is, you are the ruler, you are in control. No[7], that's not enough: you do not even try to control yourself, for self-control, self-rule—in English the two words, self-control and self-rule, have very different connotations, but here they all have the same meaning: for self-control, self-rule would be incompatible with freedom as you understand freedom. You believe that self-control is unworthy of a free man. A free man is a man who does what he likes. And to prove your freedom to yourself, you successfully try to rule me, or more generally to try to rule others, because a man who rules others is obviously a free man and not a slave. You try to make me a slave. Therefore I have no choice but to comply with your wish.

Now this implies one point of great importance: Meno's lack of self-control, Meno's lack of *sōphrosunē,* moderation. And that prevents him from truly learning. So this much we can now safely say: If learning makes us better, then moderation, self-control must be a good thing; [it] must be a virtue. Nothing yet follows regarding justice, whether justice is equally necessary for learning; that we must leave open. Socrates narrows down the question to be considered to "Is virtue teachable or not?" whereas Meno had given at least one alternative, that it comes by nature or in another way. Yes. And now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, the least you can do is to relax just a little of your authority, and allow the question—whether virtue comes by teaching or some other way—to be examined by means of hypothesis.

LS: "Of an assumption." The Greek word is *hypothesis*, but it doesn't have exactly the same meaning which it has now. "We make an assumption." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> I mean by assumption[i] what the geometricians often do in dealing with a question put to them; for example, whether a certain area is capable of being inscribed as a triangular space in a given circle: they reply—"I cannot yet tell whether it has that capability; but I think, if I may put it so, that I have a certain helpful assumption for the problem, and it is as follows: If this area is such that when you apply it to the given line of the circle you find it falls short by a space similar to that which you have just applied, then I take it you have one consequence, and if it is impossible for it to fall so, then some other. Accordingly I wish to put an assumption before I state our conclusion as regards inscribing this figure in the circle by saying whether it is impossible or not." (86e1-87b2)

LS: Ya. Socrates humbly asked for a slight favor, so as not to give up entirely the connection with the question as to what is virtue: Let us proceed like geometricians do. Now[8] let us look at a passage in Klein. That is a very famous and controversial[9] passage. Will you read on page 206, paragraph 3?

Mr. Reinken:

> The geometrician whom Socrates conjures up is a very cautious one; but the precision of his speech does not quite reach technical lucidity. He is made to use terms which Socrates elsewhere criticizes. Moreover, he is made to use them in a way which seems to interfere with their "technical" relevance. Above all, it may be asked, are we really presented here with something resembling a geometrical "hypothesis"?
>
> Recent commentators, who do not seem to be aware of the gentle hoax perpetrated by Socrates at this point, have tried to throw some light on the geometrical problem that might possibly be hinted at here.[ii]

LS: Then he gives a brief discussion of these guesses. The beginning of the first sentence of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The lack of precision in Socrates' presentation of this geometrical problem is hardly due to the unsettled character of mathematical terminology in Plato's time.

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[i] The Loeb reads "hypothesis," but throughout this passage Mr. Reinken follows Strauss's request by replacing this word with "assumption."

[ii] Klein, 206-7.

LS: Ya. In other words, this is an easy way out, to say [that the Greek mathematicians][10] had not yet reached this state of sophistication which we have, or perhaps which they had one generation after Plato; [this] is not a reasonable way out. Good. Now let us read the end of this long speech.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] In the same way with regard to our question about virtue, since we do not know either what is or what kind of thing it may be, we had best make use of an assumption in considering whether it can be taught or not, as thus: what kind of thing must virtue be in the class of mental properties, so as to be teachable or not? In the first place, if it is something dissimilar or similar to knowledge, is it taught or not—

LS: "teachable or not"

Mr. Reinken:

> teachable or not—or, as we were saying just now, remembered?

LS: "rememberable," or "recollectable."

Mr. Reinken: Rememberable, recollectable.

> Let us have no disputing about the choice of a name: is it taught?"

LS: "Is it teachable?"

Mr. Reinken:

> teachable. Or is not this fact plain to everyone—that the one and only thing taught to men is knowledge?
> [MEN.] I agree to that. (87b2-c4)

LS: Yes, now what is the point which Socrates makes? We do not know what virtue is, but we proceed in a quasi-geometrical way.[11] We say, assume what virtue must be, or what kind [of thing it is] if it is to be teachable. And the general answer is [that] it must have the character of knowledge. If[12] virtue does not have the character of knowledge, there is no reason to assume that it will be teachable. Now let us see the other point[s] in Klein's *Commentary* which are useful for our purpose. Let us read a bit on page 208, "Socrates proceeds immediately."

Mr. Reinken:

> to draw the analogy with the case of [excellence].[iii] Since we know neither "what" it is[iv] nor what it is "like" or "how" it is[v], we have to make use of a

[iii] Klein gives only the Greek: *aretē*.
[iv] Klein gives the Greek: (*outh' hoti estin*).
[v] Ibid (*outh' hopoion ti*).

"supposition"[vi] in this case, too, in exploring the question whether excellence is teachable or not.

Does the co-ordination—[vii]

LS: We do not have to go into that, although it is important for you to read that; but we have to go on here. To repeat, under what conditions could virtue be teachable? Answer: If it is like knowledge. It doesn't have to be knowledge without qualification. Socrates dismisses now the distinction between teachable and recollectable as unimportant, and you remember how important it seemed to be at an earlier stage. What does this mean, that he now says: Well, call it teachable, call it recollectable, it doesn't make any difference? The simplest answer is that this distinction is no longer necessary; it has fulfilled its purpose. It never was literally true. The slave scene showed that Socrates did teach the slave; therefore there is such a thing as teaching. But we must take a broader view. A descent has taken place, has started [to occur]. It has already started with the slave scene, for that scene proved that learning is recollection, but does not have a necessary connection with questions of "what is a thing?" The peak of the dialogue—because if there is descent, there was a peak—the peak was this passage on recollection, with its ambiguity regarding the practical conclusions. Is the right way of life a life of piety, or is it a life of examination, or investigation, or learning? And this passage was also the peak because it gave an implicit answer to Meno's initial and crucial question: Learning makes us better, which implies an answer to what virtue is, because you cannot know what makes you better if you do not know what is good. Meno cannot learn, and that means he cannot acquire virtue, and he cannot have acquired it if learning alone makes us better. But could he not live piously without learning? This possibility is silently dropped, which means Socrates drops silently the possibility of a non-philosophic virtue, although it would seem to be of the utmost practical importance. How then should Meno live? He may not yet be an arch-villain, but he is about to become one. Is it not Socrates's responsibility to prevent this terrible thing from happening? Or is his case altogether hopeless? Is there nothing which Socrates could advise him to do, no single good deed of which even Meno is capable? Well, we must wait and see. Now let us—yes?

Student: I just want to clarify a point. When you say that Socrates dropped the possibility of non-philosophic virtue, is that in general or in the dramatic context vis-a-vis Meno?

LS: To begin with, only the latter answer is possible:[13] Meno is not a man who could be induced to be a man of ordinary decency. Now that is understood, and that is implied in his arch-villainy; but the question is whether he could not be led toward virtue, perhaps toward a higher virtue different from ordinary decency, by Socrates. That[14] we must see. It is very unlikely, but still we will get some further evidence of it, because there will be various kinds of virtue [that] will come to sight more and more. Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: Could you explain a little further why the identification of learning and recollection involved a descent?

[vi] Ibid (*hypothemenoi*).
[vii] Klein, 208.

LS: Involved?

Mr. Schaefer: Yeah. You said that that was a part of the descent, that signified descent.

LS: Yes, because after all, this whole discussion came to this point with this radical question: Is learning possible? And Socrates says learning is possible[15] only as recollection, i.e., not through teaching as teaching is ordinarily understood. This was[16] the highest point reached.

Mr. Schaefer: Is the idea that learning is recollection, is that itself still the peak?

LS: Yes, yes, I would say that.

Mr. Schaefer: Where is it [that] the descent begins?

LS: After that. In a way, in the slave scene, because in the slave scene the possibility of learning [as] equal [to] recollecting was shown, but without any reference to the question of "what is?" That is the point. And the other point which I also made [is] that the slave scene showed that the answerer needs guidance, the recollector needs guidance by a questioner. And now Socrates withholds this guidance from Meno. And then poor Meno—I think we are entitled to have some compassion even with an arch-villain if confronted with such a superior man as Socrates—then what can poor Meno do after he [is left] without that guidance? As little as the slave could do anything regarding the geometrical problem. Good. Yes?

Student: I have a question about Socrates's next statement but it relates to the last question, and that is that[17] given [that] virtue is a kind of knowledge—

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: He then says if virtue is a kind of knowledge, clearly it must be taught.

LS: It must be teachable—teachable. No, the point is this.[18] We do not know what virtue is, but we want to know whether it is teachable or not. Of what character must it be in order to be teachable? And then Socrates says it must be at least akin to knowledge, something like knowledge—which is a very broad statement, saying perhaps there are things which are not exactly knowledge but like knowledge, which share this quality of being teachable.

Same Student: Does that imply then that all knowledge is teachable?

LS: Yes. Oh, there is no question about that. Not necessarily to everyone, but is this not true: Whenever you know something, say, mineralogy, then you can teach it—perhaps not to everyone, but to everyone who has a certain understanding and the necessary motivation, as they say today. Knowledge—that is a fair proposition, that the sphere of

knowledge and the sphere of teachability coincide. You must not take knowledge necessarily in the narrow sense of academic disciplines, but for example a shoemaker who knows his trade can of course teach an apprentice how to become a shoemaker, an example which will be used later on; that also belongs to the things where knowledge and teachability go together. Good. Then let us go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Then if virtue is a kind of knowledge—"

LS: Ya, not "a kind": "is some kind of knowledge."

Mr. Reinken:

> some kind of knowledge, clearly it must be teachable?
> [MEN.] Certainly.

LS: Now[19] to repeat, in order to be teachable, virtue must be some kind of knowledge, some kind of science.[20] What does he mean by that? We have already found such a distinction between figure and some figure, some kind of figure, in the discussion earlier. Now it is clear that virtue is not, for instance, geometry. Therefore [he means] some kind of knowledge [but] not every kind, because otherwise all mathematicians[21] [and] geometricians could be virtuous, which is a shocking and paradoxical assertion. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> So you see we have made short work of this question—if virtue belongs to one class of things it is teachable, and if to another, it is not.
> [MEN.] To be sure.

LS: That is a grave step. I mean, however ignorant they may be, they have at least now a clear statement of the problem to be solved. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> The next question, it would seem, that we have to consider is whether virtue is knowledge, or of another kind than knowledge.
> [MEN.] I should say that is the next thing we have to consider. (87c5-d1)

LS: Yes. As you see, Socrates has now restored, without Meno's noticing it, the primacy of the question: What is virtue? There is a point in Klein's comment here which [we should read]. Let us look at page 211, the paragraph at the top, "What has actually happened in this exchange?"

Mr. Reinken:

> What has actually happened in this exchange? Socrates has brushed aside Meno's question (for the time being at least) and returned to his own, for which he had claimed priority. He has done that obliquely and rather playfully, however serious the intent, by means of mathematical devices and—not quite transparent—mathematical language, the authority of which Meno is not wont to challenge.

LS: Now skip the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> What ought to be investigated now, "it seems" Socrates has just said, is "whether excellence is knowledge or different from knowledge." On the affirmative side of this alternative "knowledge" is not qualified at all. *Tis*—

LS: Which means "a kind of."

Mr. Reinken:

> a kind of, for example, used only a short while ago,[viii] is omitted. Nor is it suggested that excellence may be "like"[ix] knowledge. The negative side of the alternative, on the other hand, which envisages the possibility of excellence being "different" from knowledge, does this ambiguously. The word [other][x]—

LS: *Alloion*, of another kind.

Mr. Reinken:

> [of another kind] was used previously[xi] in opposition to[xii] unlike, contrasting—

LS: No, "*to hoion*."

Mr. Reinken: *Hoion*, which is "like."

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> another kind, in opposition to "like," "unlike" contrasting with "like." The same word seems now to be used to contrast the possibility of excellence being—simply—"knowledge" with the possibility of excellence being—simply—"not knowledge." The phrasing of the alternative, in other words, blurs the distinction between the "how" and the "what." This haziness will persist in different guises throughout the *logos* Socrates is about to present.[xiii]

LS: Ya. You know the distinction between the "what" and the "how" is of course crucial and should not be blurred, if it is true that we cannot know how a thing is if we do not know in the first place what it is. Mr. Malbin?

Mr. Malbin: I don't see why Socrates has dropped the phrase "a kind of knowledge."

[viii] Klein gives the Stephanus number (87c5).
[ix] Klein gives the Greek: (*hoion*).
[x] Klein gives only the Greek, *alloion*. Mr. Reinken attempts to translate it spontaneously.
[xi] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (87b7)
[xii] Klein gives only the Greek: *hoion*. Mr. Reinken does not attempt to translate it, thus occasioning Strauss's interruption.
[xiii] Klein, 211.

LS: Pardon? Why Socrates has dropped—

Mr. Malbin: Why he has dropped the qualifier that he used in the question before.

LS: Ya, well he will do some other strange things in the sequel, and that is characteristic of this part of the *Meno* more than of the earlier part, that Socrates is now deliberately vague and inexact. Or to use the expression I used before: we are definitely on our way down. What Socrates wishes to achieve by this procedure we cannot know before we have [22]finished it, but I can let the secret out of the bag in a simple way. Socrates[23] is now leading Meno to an answer to the question of what is virtue, but this answer is based on certain fundamental vaguenesses and ambiguities which we will summarize later when we have seen all of it. Now in d, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

> Well now, surely we—

LS: To repeat, you all know where we stand: if virtue is knowledge-like, then it is teachable. If it is not knowledge-like, it is not teachable. Yes, and now we go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Well now, surely we call virtue a good thing, do we not, and our assumption[xiv] stands, that it is good?
> [MEN.] Certainly we do.
> [SOC.] Then if there is some good apart and separable from knowledge, it may be that virtue is not a kind of knowledge; but if there is nothing good that is not embraced by knowledge, our suspicion that virtue is a kind of knowledge would be well founded.
> [MEN.] Quite so. (87d2-8)

LS: Yes. Now that virtue is good is an assumption, a *hypothesis*, which is now to be explored. After all, perhaps virtue is not good. It all depends of course [on] what virtue is. In one sense, in the ordinary sense of the word virtue, all criminals say that virtue is no good. But perhaps the problem is deeper.[24] So it is an assumption, and we start from this consideration: if there are good things separable from knowledge, independent of knowledge, virtue could be good without being some kind of knowledge. Is this clear? If there are any good things which have nothing to do with knowledge, then perhaps virtue belongs to these things. But if there are no good things which are not comprised by knowledge, virtue is presumably some kind of knowledge. Now what does he mean? Because the two things, separable from knowledge and comprised by knowledge, are not simply opposites. Now let us use our own heads. There are good things independently of knowledge. Does this make sense? Give an example.

Student: Food.

[xiv] Mr. Reinken follows Strauss's cue. In original: "assumption."

LS: Pardon?

Another Student: Compassion.

LS: [25][The issue of compassion] I explained last time. No, but I'll give you a simple example: good digestion. Ya? But a good digestion[26] [is something that] you have[27] without any knowledge of it, and the less you know about it the better. [Laughter] But is not good digestion comprised by knowledge? For example, do not the sciences or arts of gymnastics and medicine deal also with good digestion? So while it is true that a good digestion doesn't need knowledge, knowledge is by no means irrelevant for good digestion. It may be restored, at least, by science. In the latter sense, all good things are comprised by knowledge, and virtue would be some kind of knowledge, so that even something so subrational as the digestion would show the necessity of that. But it shows also the ambiguity, because it is only when the digestion is in a defective state that you need to go see a physician about it. Ya. Now, yes? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: How about good luck?

LS: Good luck, yes, that has nothing to do with knowledge.[28] So good luck, say, an Irish sweepstakes—ya, would this be an example?

Mr. Butterworth: Irish sweepstakes, or being born into an aristocratic family.

LS: Same? [Laughter] No fundamental difference. But then still the question arises: What will you do with your good luck? So I think my example of the digestion is better; forgive me. [Laughter] Good. Now let us go on where—you see Socrates is now doing to Meno all the time what he did to the boy. [29]I mean not only refuting him, as he did when Meno gave his answers as to what virtue is, but leading him up and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Now it is by virtue that we are good?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And if good, profitable; for all good things are profitable, are they not?
> [MEN.] Yes. [Laughter]
> [SOC.] So virtue is profitable?
> [MEN.] That must follow from what has been admitted.

LS: Well, these are the kind of passages which make people laugh,[30] because they seem [to be] utter trivialities. But they are not, because there are good things which are profitable, and there are good things[31] [of] which we cannot properly say they are profitable because they are good in themselves. But[32] let us see; the passage is difficult. What do we mean by holding that virtue is good? That is our hypothesis, you know. We mean that it is the source of our goodness, so [it] is distinguished from a good apple, for example, or any other good of this kind. Through virtue we are good. Yes, but what does that mean, we are good? And the answer suggested here is: We are useful. I think that is better than profitable. Klein translates it, I believe, "beneficial." Yes, that is all right, a

good man is useful. But one question which is here not even raised: Useful to whom? To others? This could mean a good man is a benefactor of human beings. Is a benefactor of human beings a good man necessarily? That depends. Xenophon in his Greek history describes a tyrant somewhere in northern Greece who was regarded as a good man by his subjects, but in fact he was only their benefactor. And Xenophon makes a remark to the effect that this is a vulgar error, to identify the good man with the benefactor.[xv] So[33] [take] a poor man, a beggar, who gets some money, say, a ten-dollar bill, from a gangster who just passes and who is in such a mood. The gangster is no doubt his benefactor, but is he a good man? It's a question.

And now there is another [issue]. Xenophon expresses it also in another way in his *Oeconomicus*, saying most men believe to love him or those by whom they believed to be benefited.[xvi] Was the sentence too long? Shall I break it up? Most men believe to love those by whom they believe to be benefited. That shows a great problem. Not necessarily do men love those whom they believe to love. That's an error which is possible, and perhaps not infrequent. But what is the basis of that very common belief of men, that they love someone [or some people because] they are benefited by that individual or those individuals? But what does benefiting mean? That your whims are complied with? Many people regard this as a benefit. And therefore it is a question what is true benefit, a question which is here not explicitly raised. That's one of the defects of this argument, as we shall see soon.

Let us come back to the simple surface which conceals great difficulties. Virtue is admittedly useful, and hence in order to find out whether or not virtue is a kind of knowledge we must consider the useful things. That seems to be a reasonable policy. And this supplies us with the transition to the sequel. Let's go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Then let us see, in particular instances, what sort of things they are that profit us.

LS: Or "are useful."

Mr. Reinken:

> are useful[xvii]. Health, let us say, and strength, and beauty, and wealth—these and their like we call useful, do we not?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] But these same things, we admit, actually harm us at times; or do you dispute that statement?
> [MEN.] No, I agree.

[xv] Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.3.12

[xvi] *Oeconomicus* 20.29.

[xvii] In original: "that profit us." The Loeb translated *ōphelos* and its derivatives as "profitable" throughout this section, but Mr. Reinken follows Strauss's instructions here and in the subsequent sections.

> [SOC.] Consider now, what is the guiding condition in each case that makes them at one time useful, and at another harmful. Are they not useful when the use of them is right, and harmful when it is not? (87d8-88a5)

LS: Yes. "Right" could be misunderstood; let us say "correct." I mean it is not necessarily meant in a moral sense here. Now Socrates applies[34] a tight rein on Meno; you see, he really leads him up. Good means here useful, of course, but useful to us, i.e., to me or whoever that is. Whether or not these things are useful to me depends on their right, correct use. And he gives here four examples of useful things, useful in various ways.[35] It even [came] out in the translation [that these terms] are separated. Health comes first, separated by the words "we say" and then [the] three others: strength, beauty, and wealth. And in the latter, beauty is in the center, as you can easily see. Now I believe there is no difficulty here. So [of] these, wealth is obviously useful, as everyone who needed money and didn't have it, and even those who have it, can know it. But it is not necessarily useful, because people may make a very poor use of wealth and may ruin their whole lives by it. So, good. Yes, now?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then let us consider next the goods of the soul: by these you understand moderation[xviii], justice, courage, intelligence, memory, magnanimity, and so forth? (88a6-b1)

LS: Now [I would not translate] "intelligence."[36] I would say "docility," the ability to learn quickly or easily. Now Socrates discusses other [37]good, i.e., useful things, namely, which belong to the soul. And he mentions six of them, as we have seen. He omits of course piety. This is in no way surprising anymore, but it must be emphasized because that is an important part of the action of the dialogue.

Now Meno had enumerated virtues in an earlier passage, 74a4 to 6, which you might consult, but we cannot read that now. If we compare Meno's enumeration with Socrates's enumeration we see that Meno had spoken of wisdom, *sophia*, which Socrates[38] [now omits]. Socrates replaces wisdom by the ability to learn and memory. What is the difference between wisdom and [the] ability to learn, and memory? There is one important difference.[39] [Yes]?

Student: Well, one is static and one is continually progressive.

LS: And the other?

Same Student: It is continually developing. In other words, if you have the ability to learn and memory, you can be gaining ever more wisdom, whereas to say wisdom is to say a static thing.

LS: Ya.[40] The word static is[41] transferred from modern mechanics to a sphere which has nothing to do with mechanics; therefore it is not a good word—as little as "dynamic."

[xviii] In original: "temperance."

Occasionally we must draw up a list of the words which we should not use in such discussions, but static and dynamic would be some of them. No, what is the obvious difference? Yes?

Student: Wisdom is that which is an act, and the ability to learn and memory is just being potential.

LS: That is—*potentia*; that is true, [they are] only conditions for [wisdom]. One can say that. But that means also that [42][if] a man has the ability to learn and [43][if] he has memory in the sense of a good memory, [these] are natural gifts. Wisdom is not a natural gift, although it is based on natural gifts. Now the list here reminds us of the list of the natural conditions of being a philosopher in the *Republic*, in 485a to 487a and 490a to c. Socrates speaks of the nature, the natural gifts which a man must have in order to become a philosopher. And we learn from this again the trivial wisdom, but in a strange way neglected in the *Meno*, that virtue is impossible without a specific nature, natural gift. On the lowest level you see it, that a certain thing called ordinary decency cannot reasonably be expected from a moronic man or from an insane man. And it is of course more obvious in the case of the higher kinds of virtue, which require more specific conditions than non-moronism. Yes. Now will you go on, or do you have a question?

Mr. Reinken: No.

> [SOC.] Now tell me; such of these as you think are not knowledge, but different from knowledge—do they not sometimes harm us, and sometimes are of use to us? For example, courage, if it is courage apart from prudence, and only a sort of boldness: when a man is bold without sense, he is harmed; but when he has sense at the same time, he is profited, is he not? (88b1-6)

LS: So in other words, even regarding what is ordinarily called virtues, there is the difficulty that they are not simply good. They also may be misused, just as strength and wealth may be misused. But it is not clear here whether this is true of all these six things mentioned, I mean whether they all can be misused. But if they are susceptible to being misused, they are not obviously kinds of knowledge; hence they may be harmful. They may be misused, and this is particularly clear in the case of bravery and manliness, which in a very frequent form is just a kind of brutish courage,[44] [which may be very harmful]. Yes?

Student: As regards these six things, you said that Socrates replaced ability to learn and memory—he put those in the place of wisdom as natural gifts. But looking at the others, are they—?

LS: No, no, that is [an] open [question], what they are. [45]The question which you raise is reasonable, but I have to explain the fact that we had more or less the same list before, where it was given by Meno. And there, wisdom was in[cluded], but ability to learn and memory were not in[cluded]. And I have to explain that. And[46] what I said referred only to this part of the question, not to the statement as a whole. Is this clear?

Same Student: Yes, it's clear, except that I don't understand why he was, you know, attempting to enumerate natural gifts—

LS: He did not mean that—

Same Student: He wouldn't have done that with—

LS: Well, I will give the answer, although it will appear[47] very soon, namely, all these things mentioned here are according to Socrates not by themselves truly virtues. And they have this in common with natural gifts, which become virtuous only by the proper cultivation. And you can even say the same thing, say, of courage, and even of moderation, that they do not become true virtue except if properly cultivated. But let us first—yes?

Student: Could you give an example of justice?

LS: Ya. Well, you anticipate too much. Let us first read the next passage.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And the same holds of moderation and docility[xix]—"

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> things learnt and co-ordinated with the aid of sense are profitable, but without sense they are harmful?
> [MEN.] Most certainly.
> [SOC.] And in brief, all the undertakings and endurances of the soul, when guided by wisdom, end in happiness, but when folly guides, in the opposite? (88b6-c3)

LS: Ya. Now we have to watch a bit the terms used. He said wisdom. The Greek word is *phronēsis*, which is ordinarily translated by "practical wisdom." Let us say "prudence." Of course prudence is open to other objections in the translation, but let us use it use it as a single word. And the word which he had used before was *nous*, which here means something like sense. Sense: having sense, having reason. Now Socrates applies a point he made before explicitly to moderation and the ability to learn. Of course it must be applied, as you have seen, to justice as well. Justice too is in need of something controlling, without which it might become vice. All so-called virtues are beneficial to us, are truly virtuous only if they are guided by prudence. For only if so guided do they lead to happiness. The word[48] happiness occurs I believe only here.

Now why could justice not be good enough? Why would justice be in need of prudence?[49] Well, what is justice? We have to have a provisional answer, otherwise we cannot take care of that. Well, at the beginning of the *Republic* a sensible and nice man says: Justice means to give everyone what belongs to him, or to restore it to him. Yes, but

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[xix] In original: "temperance and intelligence."

if what belongs to him is a gun and he has become a madman in the meantime, is it just to return the gun? So you need your head, and [you] have to make out what are the present conditions. You have to think; you have to use prudence in order to act justly. You do not act justly if you return his dangerous property to a man who has now become insane. So there is no difficulty in saying that justice too is in need of prudence. Yes?

Student: My question is: there seems to be a difference here between what you are proving and what Socrates is saying. In one sense—this in your example of compassion from before—you show that compassion is not just enough, and the same with justice; it's not just enough. We must have knowledge, too. But is knowledge just enough without justice and compassion—

LS: That's a very good question.

Same Student: —which is what Socrates seems to say.

LS: Seems to say, yes,[50] but I think he never says it.[51] We have to wait. Therefore, since you are so impatient and you are not the only one, I have to anticipate. Socrates says that prudence is either virtue or the most important ingredient of virtue. Now in the latter case, he would of course admit what you say. Ya? Good.

Now let me mention[52] one point. If this argument as hitherto stated is correct, then prudence is *the* profitable or *the* useful thing, or *the* good thing. For prudence is the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness, for *eudaimonia*. The virtues owe their being virtues to prudence alone. Now prudence is not the same as knowledge. Will you write on the blackboard the words *phronēsis* and *epistēmē*? [Mr. Reinken writes on the blackboard] Now *phronēsis* is traditionally translated as *prudentia*, and we say prudence. *Epistēmē* is traditionally translated by *scientia*, science. And this distinction between prudence and science is I think still intelligible. What is the difference between prudence and science, knowledge in general? By the way, the word *epistēmē* is ordinarily translated by the translator by knowledge, which is in a way good because knowledge is not as technical a term as science, but in another way also bad because[53] knowledge would of course also comprise prudence. That is a problem.

Now what is the difference between prudence and science? Prudence necessarily determines the will, whereas science does not. A man who knows the good without doing it is not a prudent man. We have discussed this on an earlier occasion: the man who is habitually drunk although he knows he shouldn't be drunk is not a sensible man. He only has the quality that he knows that he shouldn't do it. The detailed analysis (not sufficiently clear [and] therefore in need of commentaries) of prudence you find in the sixth book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Aristotle makes here clear one point: that prudence, being a virtue of the intellect, an intellectual virtue, is itself not a moral virtue like moderation, justice, and so on. But there cannot be a moral virtue without prudence, nor prudence without moral virtue. They cannot be separated, although they must be distinguished. According to Aristotle's analysis moral virtue shows us the right end, namely, that we should choose the noble and just for its own sake. In other words,

moral virtue, we can say, shows us true happiness and makes us desire it; and prudence shows us what to do in the circumstances in order to be happy. Socrates disregards here completely the ambiguity of happiness. He doesn't say a word[54] [about the meaning of happiness]: you know, what some people and many of us understand by happiness[55] may very well be the opposite. Now why does he do that? Why is he so superficial? Well, he argues toward Meno *ad hominem*, [this] is the technical term—and the *homo*, the man in this particular case, is of course Meno,[56] who is a lover of wealth and power, as we know. Even such a man needs prudence in a lower sense, what Aristotle calls cleverness; but in ordinary parlance by very ordinary people the distinction is not so nicely drawn as it is by Aristotle. And Socrates surely doesn't do anything to avoid this difficulty. Yes, now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Then if virtue is something that is in the soul, and must needs be useful[xx], it ought to be wisdom—

LS: "Prudence."

Mr. Reinken:

> seeing that all the properties of the soul are in themselves neither useful nor harmful, but are made either one or the other by the addition of prudence[xxi] or folly; and hence, by this argument, virtue being profitable must be a sort of prudence.
> [MEN.] I agree. (88c4-d3)

LS: Yes. Now since virtue is useful, it is some kind of prudence. Socrates doesn't say it is simply prudence. There are apparently various kinds of prudence; we don't know which. Do you have an idea what could be kinds of prudence? Yes?

Student: In one sense, you could say that Socrates's speech in the *Apology* lacked the lower kind of prudence while it might have had the—

LS: *Phronēsis*.

Same Student: *Phronēsis*. It lacked what Aristotle would call the cleverness as opposed to—

LS: Ya. No, more simply. For example, there is the prudence of the householder and there is the prudence of the statesman; that would be a more obvious distinction. Now since virtue is useful, it is some kind of prudence.[57] There is a difficult passage here when he says: If then virtue[58] is one of the things within the soul. What does he mean? How can one doubt that? What does that mean? Could virtue be external to the soul? Could it

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[xx] In original: "profitable" rather than "useful" throughout this section.
[xxi] In original: "wisdom," here and in the following line. The same applies to all subsequent uses of "prudence" in the section.

come to the soul from the outside, as a gift from heaven, as it were? It is not a farfetched question, as you will see from the end of this dialogue. Good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then as to the other things, wealth and the like, that we mentioned just now as being sometimes good and sometimes harmful—are not these also made useful[xxii] or harmful by the soul according as she uses and guides them correctly[xxiii] or wrongly: just as, in the case of the soul generally, we found that the guidance of prudence[xxiv] makes useful the properties of the soul, while that of folly makes them harmful?

LS: "Property of the soul" is badly translated,[59] [it is better to say] "things in the soul."

Mr. Reinken

> The things of the soul—folly makes them harmful.
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] And the prudent soul guides correctly, and the foolish erroneously?
> [MEN.] That is so.
> [SOC.] Then may we assert this as a universal rule, that in man all other things depend upon the soul, while the things of the soul herself depend upon prudence, if they are to be good; and so by this account the useful will be prudence, and virtue, we say, is useful?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Hence we conclude that virtue is either wholly or partly prudence?
> [MEN.] It seems to me that your statement, Socrates, is excellent.
> [SOC.] Then if this is so, good men cannot be good men cannot be good by nature. (88d4-89a6)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So the result is now clear. We know now what virtue is. *Phronēsis*, prudence, is *the* useful thing, because everything else which may be useful becomes good or useful only through prudence. Through prudence and only through prudence anything becomes useful. And *phronēsis*, prudence, is a virtue; and virtue is useful; hence prudence is useful. And the conclusion, which does not literally follow: prudence is virtue as a whole or a part of virtue. Now here allowance is made [for the inclusion of] some other things: compassion, for example. Now we have some answer to the question of what virtue is, an answer to which Socrates guided Meno. Now [according to] this answer[60] prudence is either the same as virtue or the most important ingredient of virtue. It is not a very exact answer, but it is something, and we ought to be grateful after the great paralysis we have undergone vicariously when we had empathy with Meno.

[xxii] In original: "profitable" (as elsewhere in the passage).
[xxiii] In original: "rightly"
[xxiv] In original: "wisdom," as Mr. Reinken reads throughout the passage.

Now this answer to the question of what virtue is differs of course strikingly from Meno's three answers. (You remember these three answers.) But Meno doesn't offer the slightest resistance. How come? Why did he change his mind so radically? Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, in a certain sense this underlies part of the answers he gave, at least the second and third. If you want the ability to rule men, it would obviously depend upon a certain sort of prudence.

LS: Yes. That is, I think, the only answer.

Mr. Shulsky:[61] And the third answer, the ability to get the good things, Socrates assumes that it depends on prudence.

LS: So in other words, Socrates's answer as Meno understands it is compatible with Meno's answers. Think of the first answer: to do one's job as a man, as a woman, or as a slave. Must one not know what one's job here and now is in order to do it? Or the second answer: to be able to rule human beings. Must one not know how to do it here and now? And finally, to get the beautiful things—the third answer—must one again not know how to get them here and now? [Therefore one needs] prudence. So this is perfectly acceptable to Meno, that prudence is at least an ingredient of virtue. Whether it does not need other things which would be called in modern times energy—have you ever heard that word?—which would be called by the Greeks manliness or something of this kind, that is [not] excluded, because what is the use of your prudence if you do not do what prudence says? Good.

Now after Socrates has made Meno paralyzed, just as he had made the slave paralyzed (you remember, the slave also was paralyzed; he didn't know his way out), he makes Meno resourceful—*euporon*, in opposition to *aporon*—just as he did to the slave. And Meno is as satisfied with the result as[62] the slave [was]. Needless to say that Meno knows the truth about virtue as little as the slave does, because it was made clear to us that the slave has only gotten some understanding of this[63] geometric proposition, but if he will not undergo severe, [frequent and repeated] training[64] he will not have acquired knowledge. Now he has not yet acquired knowledge. Socrates, I admit, covers it up again and says then he knows it already, although in the strictest sense he does not know it. It is characteristic of the dialogue, especially of the latter part, that Socrates presents to us a strict formula and a loose formula, and we have to find out which is the better formula. And we have also to find out why does Socrates in a way misguide Meno—and therefore also us, because we hear[65] to begin with only what Socrates says to Meno and ordinarily we do not take the trouble to consider the[66] personal equation of Meno, which we have to do. Good. Now let us conclude this section. "If this is so."

Mr. Reinken:[xxv]

> If this is so, good men cannot be good by nature.
> [MEN.] I think not."

[xxv] In original: "Then," which Mr. Reinken omits here.

LS: Now why can men not be good by nature if virtue is prudence?

Mr. Reinken: Babes are so—babes in the wood?

LS: Yes. Now how do they become prudent ordinarily,[67] as we would say without any sophistication? Pardon?

Student: By practice.

LS: By experience, of which bad experience is not a negligible part, and clearly in the moment of birth we don't have that.[68] In other words, in order to be prudent, in order to be sensible, we need a certain maturity. That's another way in which you could say it. So nature as the source of virtue is disregarded, just as practice had been dropped a long time ago.[69] In both cases this is due to Socrates's suggestions. You remember Meno's initial question: Is virtue acquired by teaching, or by practice, or by nature? Whereas the simple truth is that all three are needed. And Meno's reason was probably that he was concerned with this possibility in particular: Can virtue be acquired by teaching? Because that was the great issue between Gorgias and the sophists, as I have stated before with a view to a passage to which we will come very soon. And now[70] we will make a pause very soon, but let us first read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] No, for then, I presume, we should have had this result: if good men were so by nature, we surely should have had—

LS: Ya. "Would become good by nature," by the very fact of being born.

Mr. Reinken:

> we surely should have had men able to discern who of the young were good by nature, and on their pointing them out we should have taken them over and kept them safe in the citadel, having set our mark on them far rather than on our gold treasure, in order that none might have tampered with them—

LS: Ya. "Corrupted them," "that none would corrupt them." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> that none might debase[xxvi] them, and that when they came to be of age, they might be useful to their country.

LS: "To their cities."

Mr. Reinken: Cities, of course.

> [MEN.] Yes, most likely, Socrates." (89a5-b8)

[xxvi] This conforms neither to the Loeb ("tamper with") nor to Strauss's recommendation ("corrupt").

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Does this remark remind you of something? Pardon?

Student: The *Republic*.

LS: Obviously, the *Republic*. There we have men who know the natures of the young pick them, as it were, at the moment of their birth. They have to [do so] very early, at least, say, within the first year, and then watch them [so] that they are properly educated and kept away from the lower-class children, who might also exert a bad influence on them according to Socrates. But you see here one implication which[71] should not surprise us. Socrates does not claim that he could be one of these men who would know the natures of the young. Socrates and Meno would only belong to the guardians, to the people subordinate to the knowers. This goes without saying. But again, it is of course[72] the *Republic* [that] reminds us again of the fact that nature, the natural aptitudes are important for virtue, for the various kinds of virtues. Yes. And now?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] So since it is not by nature that the good become good, is it by learning[xxvii]?
> [MEN.] We must now conclude, I think, that it is; and plainly, Socrates, on our hypothesis that virtue is knowledge, it must be taught.
> [SOC.] Yes— (89b9-c4)

LS: "It must be teachable." Now let us stop here. Virtue is or includes prudence. Can one acquire virtue by being taught? That is a somewhat different proposition. Think of the simple case: teaching, preaching is not the same as learning the hard way by experience. Is experience, in particular the sad experience through which we become sensible, not a kind of learning nevertheless? Meno, as you will have seen, is unaware of the difference between knowledge, science on the one hand, and prudence on the other, to say nothing of the fact that according to the doctrine of recollection there is learning without there being teaching. The main point: Meno accepts the apparent conclusion that virtue can be taught, and this is the view of the sophists, as will be stated shortly thereafter. For simplicity's sake, let us call that view the view of Protagoras as presented in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*,[73] and a view rejected by Gorgias. Now this is a tremendous success of Socrates. He has induced Meno to abandon Gorgias's view in the point most important to Meno: how is virtue acquired. A very great success. Not only is learning in general possible—this was already settled in the slave scene, virtue itself is learnable, teachable. But can Meno learn? And can he learn, especially, virtue? And can Protagoras, whom I take now as a type, can Protagoras teach virtue? These are still open questions, to say nothing of the many open questions which were not settled in the discussion at all. Socrates could easily have induced Meno to become a pupil of Protagoras. Protagoras is dead by now, but there are other Protagorases around. This is, however, the maximum which Socrates could have achieved with Meno. But why does he not try to do that? Answer: Socrates is a prudent man, a sensible man who would not commit a senseless act. Meno would in no way become better by listening to the speeches of Protagoras. I

[xxvii] In original: "education."

repeat my question: What then shall we advise Meno to do in order not to lead a wholly useless and perhaps even an absolutely harmful life?

So the question of what virtue is has now in a way been answered, and therefore also the question which was of main concern to Meno, namely, how to acquire it. Answer: by learning or teaching. Yes.[74] Now we seem to be at the end, in a way, but a difficulty arises apart from the many difficulties which we have observed. In Socrates's guiding questions, there is a question inherent in the final result or what is presented as the final result. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Yes, I daresay; but what if we were not right in agreeing to that?
> [MEN.] Well, it seemed to be a fine[xxviii] statement a moment ago.
> [SOC.] Yes, but not only a moment ago must it seem correct, but now also and hereafter, if it is to be at all sound.

LS: "Sound," literally "healthy," quite literally. "Sound."

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] Why, what reason have you to make a difficulty about it, and feel a doubt as a to virtue being knowledge?
> [SOC.] I will tell you, Meno. I do not withdraw as incorrect the statement that it is teachable[xxix], if it is knowledge; but as to its being knowledge, consider if you think I have grounds for misgiving. For tell me now: if anything at all, not merely virtue, is teachable, must there not be teachers and learners of it?
> [MEN.] I think so.
> [SOC.] Then, also conversely, if a thing had neither teachers nor learners, we should be right in surmising that it could not be taught?
> [MEN.] That is so: but do you think there are no teachers of virtue? (89c5-e5)

LS: Now let us stop here. Here we come to a new difficulty. Socrates has proven that virtue,[75] being knowledge, is teachable. But if it is teachable, there must be teachers of virtue and learners of virtue. Let us take the simpler case of the teachers of virtue: Are there any teachers of virtue?[76] Meno is perfectly satisfied with the result that virtue is teachable. Socrates however has his doubts; naturally he is aware of all the ambiguities of his argument. He does not doubt that if virtue is knowledge, it is teachable. He only doubts the truth of the protasis, and he does this on this ground: If virtue were knowledge and hence teachable, there would be teachers of virtue. But are there? Now, an implication: If Socrates's doubt proves to be justified, then Gorgias would be right and Socrates would, among [the] other things which he did here, have led Meno as it were to the confines of Protagoras's territory, the enemy's territory, and then have returned him to his original revered master. What a funny situation! Socrates has proven that virtue is

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[xxviii] In original: "correct." Mr. Reinken is peeking at the Greek word, *kalōs*.

[xxix] In original: "taught." Mr. Reinken is following Strauss's cue, here and wherever else he translated *didakton* as "teachable." He is not fully consistent, however: in 89e4 he sticks to the Loeb.

prudence. But now, following Meno, he speaks again of knowledge or science, just as he dropped the distinction between learnable and recollectable before. We are definitely on our way down. Things become vaguer and vaguer. What this means, we must have some patience [to discern]. Mr. Malbin?

Mr. Malbin: My memory fails me, or my recollection fails me, but wasn't this specific argument used in the *Protagoras*?

LS: Which one?

Mr. Malbin: . . .

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Malbin: Would you restate the circumstances?

LS: Yes. Now there[77] Protagoras claims to teach virtue—not in these words, but in fact. And he claims to teach prudence. He doesn't use the word *phronēsis*, but *euboulia*, the capacity of well-advisedness or advising well, which is akin to prudence. And then Socrates says he didn't think that virtue is teachable; and then Protagoras proves that virtue is teachable and says: Look around, everywhere you see fathers, and older brothers, and uncles and what have you, teach the children virtue, so[78] what I claim is only a slight improvement on what every Athenian father claims. And Protagoras of course believes that what he does is indeed more valuable for the higher regions of virtue,[79] [since] the fathers can only supply ordinary decency and Protagoras can make them virtuous in a higher sense: status. Yes, that is fine.

And then Socrates, after Protagoras has proven that to everybody's satisfaction (and he got a lot of applause; it was a big company and all), and then Socrates says, in his pettifogging way: It was not quite clear; did you mean virtue is one or few? Because [80][Protagoras] sometimes spoke of virtue in the singular and sometimes he spoke of a number of virtues. In other words, in a slightly different way than [he does] here, [81][Socrates] raises [the question to] Protagoras: You must tell me what virtue is. And Protagoras proves to be as unable to tell what virtue is as poor Meno. So this[82] begins at the other end, but it is the same kind of a problem there in the *Protagoras*. Therefore I think I began this course with a statement that the *Meno* is very close to the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*. The two dialogues converge toward the *Meno*. Now why Socrates discussed with Protagoras and with Gorgias these questions, whereas with Meno he discusses explicitly what is virtue, that is a long question. And[83] I will speak about the relation of the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* somewhat more fully when we come to the explicit mention of Gorgias and Gorgias's view of the sophists somewhat later on in the dialogue. No, surely that is in the *Protagoras*. It is also in other dialogues, but most visibly in these two dialogues, the *Protagoras* and the *Meno*. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In talking about the two dialogues coming together towards the *Meno*, you touched upon a question which I wasn't satisfied with at the beginning of the course, as to why after the *Gorgias* you didn't go on to the *Phaedrus*.

LS: The *Phaedrus*. Yes, that's a good point. Well, you see, in the first place some arbitrariness is inevitable in matters of this kind, you know? And I think that is fair. In addition, one could say it is part of academic freedom. And then I gave this justification for my apparently arbitrary procedure by saying that this *Commentary* of Klein had come out, and this[84] [induced] me to take up the *Meno* now, which otherwise indeed I would not have done.

Mr. Butterworth: Except that—maybe I shouldn't push it, but by taking up the *Protagoras* even before the *Meno*, obviously a decision led you there rather than to the *Phaedrus*.

LS: No, I can tell you—

Mr. Butterworth: I would assume that after the *Gorgias* the *Phaedrus* would be the—

LS: That is hard to say; there are so many cross-connections between the dialogues. And you can of course say [that] the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* are *the* two dialogues on rhetoric and therefore they are most closely akin. But you must not forget we are here—and that is true of the majority of students—we are in a political science department. And that meant that the primary subject of my courses on Plato will be the *Republic* and the *Laws*, and perhaps also the *Statesman*; perhaps also the *Apology* and *Crito*, because this brings up first amendment questions and this kind of thing. [Laughter]. But you understand. I gave once a course on Plato's *Banquet*, and which is a bit marginal for political science, and I gave this reason, which I thought was good enough for the purpose: that present-day political sociology is deeply influenced by Freud, as I had reasons to observe. Now Freud's doctrine is the doctrine of *erōs*. In order to have some larger horizon, we should know an alternative interpretation of *erōs*, and the most famous of it is of course Plato's, given in Plato's *Banquet*. Therefore this fits into political science. One can say that. But to speak now slightly more seriously, the *Gorgias* is, I think (and that is the opinion, the general opinion),[85] very close to the *Republic*. The two ways of political life, or let me say of political understanding—that of the philosopher king on the one hand, and that of the ordinary statesman on the other—is the theme of both dialogues, very massively. The whole question of justice as discussed in the first book of the *Republic* and the sequel is the theme of the *Gorgias*. So this was the way in which I ventured to take up the *Gorgias*. And then it became clear to me, if it wasn't clear to me before, that the *Gorgias* is very closely akin to the *Protagoras* because of the connection between rhetoric, the primary subject of the *Gorgias*, and sophistry, the primary subject, one can say, of the *Protagoras*.[86] These should be my secrets—in other words, they are so unimportant. The main point is that we study some worthwhile book . . .

Student: It would be fun to study the *Phaedrus*.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: It would be fun to study the *Phaedrus*.

LS: I couldn't hear him.

Mr. Reinken: He said it would be fun to study the *Phaedrus*.

LS: Well, fun is in every Platonic work, but the word "fun" is not the most appropriate word. [Laughter] Good. Now let us see. So it has been proven to everybody's satisfaction and with a high degree of plausibility at least that prudence is[87] the most important ingredient of virtue, even if it should not be the whole [of] virtue. And now[88] this difficulty is raised, to repeat: that if virtue is some kind of knowledge—and prudence doubtless is some kind of knowledge—it must be teachable, and there are no teachers [of it]. Now let us read and make this transition where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I must say I have often inquired whether there were any, but for all my pains I cannot find one. And yet many have shared the search with me, and particularly those persons whom I regard as best qualified for the task.

LS: Ya, "as most experienced in that matter." Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> But look, Meno: here at the very moment when he was wanted, we have Anytus sitting down beside us, to take his share in our quest. (89e6-10)

LS:[89] So that is the transition to a new scene. You know there was a kind of insertion of the slave scene, Socrates's conversation with the slave; and now there is another insertion: Socrates's conversation with Anytus. Anytus was the chief accuser of Socrates. This makes him so particularly interesting. Anytus is now meant to take part in the conversation about the teachers of virtue.[90] In this conversation, the status of the Athenian political men, the greatest and most famous, as well as of Anytus himself, who is also an Athenian politician—if we can make with the permission of President Truman, former President Truman, a distinction between statesmen and politicians. In other words, Socrates's whole fate is at stake now because Socrates provokes Anytus so much that if nothing [else] had happened, this dialogue alone would be a sufficient explanation why Anytus would try to destroy Socrates. And the reason is a difference of opinion regarding virtue. You see how practically important the question—the seemingly far-fetched and strictly academic question of what virtue is—can become, because every society does have a view of what constitutes virtue. Even the most liberal society, and precisely the most liberal society by virtue of being most liberal, has a very specific view of virtue. Virtue consists in liberalism; that's one answer. Well, there are a variety of subdivisions, of course, but this is the overall answer which may be given to the question of virtue. And every society defends its definition of virtue against such people as doubt it, and in

this particular case [against] Socrates. So I make this remark lest anyone thinks [that] what we are dealing with here is outside of the province of political science. That's not true. Good.

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[1] Deleted "are at now…We."
[2] Deleted "Yes."
[3] Deleted "Now this does not…."
[4] Deleted "being"
[5] Deleted "of."
[6] Deleted "you translated…which."
[7] Deleted "…no."
[8] Deleted "here is…."
[9] Deleted "… controverted."
[10] Deleted "they."
[11] Changed from "that we say, assume what must virtue be, of what type must it be if it is to be teachable."
[12] Deleted "it does not have…if."
[13] Deleted "is a…it is….you know that"
[14] Deleted "is…."
[15] Deleted "not…."
[16] Deleted "…I mean that was."
[17] Deleted "that."
[18] Deleted "Under what…of what kind, of what character must …."
[19] Deleted "…in order."
[20] Deleted "It is clear…."
[21] Deleted "…geometricians and only mathematicians…."
[22] Deleted "not"
[23] Deleted "will now…."
[24] Deleted "If there…now this…So."
[25] Deleted "Can there be…That."
[26] Deleted "…so."
[27] Deleted "this."
[28] Deleted "but there the question arises what…."
[29] Deleted "yes"
[30] Deleted "who do not…."
[31] Deleted "to."
[32] Deleted "let us now see, what do…."
[33] Deleted "look…."
[34] Deleted "now."
[35] Changed from "In the Greek they are…it came even out in the translation, they are separated."
[36] Moved "I would not translate."
[37] Deleted "useful"
[38] Deleted "does not."
[39] Deleted "No man is…yes, you had."
[40] Deleted "That is a…."
[41] Deleted "used from…is."
[42] Deleted "whether"
[43] Deleted "whether"
[44] Deleted "and which is of course maybe as harmful as anything else."
[45] Deleted "That is not…that is open what they are. I only…I have to explain the fact…."
[46] Deleted "what I meant."
[47] Deleted "…would appear."
[48] Deleted "occurs I believe only…."
[49] Deleted "What…."
[50] Deleted "We have to…Yes…now…."
[51] Deleted "Because he…."

[52] Deleted "…bring up…out.'
[53] Deleted "one doesn't….'
[54] Deleted "that….'
[55] Deleted "and which is rather."
[56] Deleted "Meno."
[57] Deleted "He says here…he…."
[58] Deleted "belongs to the thing…."
[59] Deleted "but."
[60] Deleted "virtue is either identical with…."
[61] Changed from "And then the second…the third answer, the ability to get the good things, well Socrates assumes you depend on prudence.."
[62] Deleted "was."
[63] Deleted "proposition, this."
[64] Deleted "that will not be repeated frequently."
[65] Deleted "only what…."
[66] Deleted "equation of Meno, the."
[67] Deleted "I mean in our…."
[68] Deleted "So this…Yes."
[69] Deleted "And now we are reduced…And."
[70] Deleted "let us read…."
[71] Deleted "would not…."
[72] Deleted "here…."
[73] Deleted "Socrates…i.e."
[74] Deleted "And now let us see what…."
[75] Deleted "is…."
[76] Deleted "is…."
[77] Deleted "it comes that Socrates…."
[78] Deleted "there is."
[79] Deleted "you know."
[80] Deleted "he"
[81] Deleted "he"
[82] Deleted "…You know, it."
[83] Deleted "well."
[84] Deleted "decided."
[85] Deleted "—is."
[86] Changed from "These are…I mean that are really a kind of…they should be my secrets, why I picked this particular thing."
[87] Deleted "at least."
[88] Deleted "there is."
[89] Deleted "And so us see this."
[90] Changed from "and in this dialogue…and in this conversation the status of the…of the Athenian political men, the greatest, the most famous as well as of Anytus himself, who is also an Athenian politician if we can make with the permission of President Truman, former President Truman, a distinction between statesmen and politicians."

Session 10: April 28, 1966

Leo Strauss: I haven't said much about Plato's political philosophy or about the political character of Plato's philosophy, and let me say a few words now about it. Now there is [some] very[1] obvious and simple evidence proving that Plato was primarily concerned with political philosophy, and that evidence is supplied by the titles of his work. All—almost all the titles consist of proper names: Meno here, for example. But there are some which have as titles subject matter: the *Republic*, the *Laws*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman*. Now three of these four are obviously political, and even the *Sophist* is in the vulgar sense a political theme, as you can see if you translate the *Sophist* into present-day language by "intellectuals," who are an important part of the political sphere.

Now I draw this tentative conclusion: that his investigation of what virtue is will not be politically irrelevant. What is political? Now the term has today at least two meanings: one non-pejorative, and the other is pejorative. The non-pejorative meaning is that political is what concerns the whole society, the common good. And the pejorative meaning, as when you say: Well, that was a political move—not objective; partisan. Now these two meanings are connected. There is an underlying unity there, which we can state very harshly but clearly by saying [that] the common good is necessarily partisan. Now behind this there is the following view, with which we are not familiar but which was developed by Plato and especially by Aristotle, and which we can state as follows: There is never the rule of all but always the rule of a part, of course of the preponderant part. Now we are led to think that democracy is the rule of all. But "democracy" literally translated means the rule of the *dēmos*, of the common people, where common has a different meaning than in the expression "the common good." So democracy is then also according to the older view the rule of a part. But if this is so, why does democracy present itself already in classical antiquity as the rule of all? Is this a hypocrisy? No. The most obvious alternative to democracy is oligarchy, the rule of the rich. When the oligarchs are in control, they exclude the poor from voting and so on. But democracy does not exclude the rich from voting and so on, so democracy seems to be the rule of all. While oligarchy is the rule of the rich, democracy presents itself not as the rule of the poor but as the rule of all free men, and the underlying notion is this: titles to rule must be excellences and not defects. Now, poverty is a defect. Freedom, to be a free man, is not a defect but a virtue. In a society in which all free men participate in ruling, the poor are in the majority, for as Aristotle in his wisdom says, it so happens that there are always more poor than rich. Therefore the rule of all free men is accidentally but necessarily the rule of the poor.

Now if we try now to ascend a bit from this observation to the most universal notion of all, we arrive at the notion which Plato uses as the title of his *Republic*, which in Greek is *politeia*, and which[2] is the central subject, the primary subject of classical political philosophy.[3] I translate [*politeia*] by "regime." Now every society is what it is by virtue of its regime. The *politeia*, the regime, gives the society its character, its form. Every *politeia*, say, oligarchy, the rule of the rich; democracy, [the] rule of the common people;

aristocracy; the rule of the best—in every society as a political society, as a formed society, a specific kind of people preponderates, be it the poor, be it the rich, be it the virtuous. And they are characterized by the dedication to a specific end: let the end be freedom in the case of democracy, wealth in the case of oligarchy. They are attuned to that end. And this is implied: that every regime has its specific notion of virtue. This thought is not[4] entirely unknown today. Some ten, fifteen years ago people spoke about the democratic and the authoritarian personality,[i] which were of course concepts of virtues.[5] The democratic personality has these and these virtues, and the authoritarian personality has these and these other virtues—although the value-free social scientists who use this distinction wouldn't allow that there is any virtue in the authoritarians. But precisely from a value-free point of view one should say [that] they have also virtues, only different ones, perhaps the opposite ones.

Now modern liberal democracy is characterized by pluralism, people say. Every kind of virtue, every notion of virtue, finds its place in it. This is not peculiar to modern democracy. According to what Plato says in the eighth book of the *Republic*, that is also true of the old—the ancient democracy. So every kind of virtue, Socrates's as well as that of Meno and that of Anytus or whoever else it may be, [has its place]. So there seems to be no virtue peculiar to democracy. But this is of course an error. There is an overall virtue peculiar to liberal democracy. For example, what is implied in what I said already: tolerance, cherishing of diversity. Otherwise, how could there be freedom for all kinds of virtue? And this is, in a liberal democracy, fostered by the laws. For example, puritanical laws—to use this word now in the wide sense in which it is used—would not be compatible with this cherishing of all kinds of diversities.

In the discussions of the present day or, let me say better, of twenty years ago, people spoke of the isms—liberal democracy, communism, and fascism, by which they meant both the opinions guiding these three regimes and the peculiar institutions required or in the service of these notions.[6] These [are] to us the most [common and] best-known [examples] of regimes. But what kind of things are regimes? Are they facts? The ordinary answer today would be [that] they are ideal types. They are constructs, constructed so that we can understand facts. The facts—the actual liberal democracies, communisms, fascisms—are always more or less approximations to the ideal types. So ideal types, the word which has become so familiar through the work of Max Weber, reminds us [above all] by its first part, "ideal" (and in a way, even by its second part) of the key term of Plato: ideas. But for Plato the ideas are however not constructs; on the contrary, they are what truly is and they are the things which we mean when we are wondering what a thing is, as in this case, in the case of the *Meno*, what virtue is, but also when we raise the question: What is liberal democracy?

Now the most important case for us regarding which we can and must raise the question "what is?" would seem to be man. For the question of what virtue is cannot well be separated from the question of what man is. And here what Plato's doctrine of ideas implies is [that] there is an essential difference between man and non-man. An essential difference. There is an essence of man. And [to grasp] this essence is more important for

[i] See, e.g., Theodor Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950).

understanding of man[7] than to understand the genesis of man, say, via a doctrine of evolution, for example, which would always leave it unclear what is that new thing which emerged under these and these conditions. What are the striking and the crucial differences between them and any simian or non-simian ancestors? This one can say. That is the issue today between the behavioralists and the non-behavioralists, to use these fashionable expressions, in the social sciences: Is there an essential difference between man and non-man, or is there not? And the behavioralists are generally speaking inclined to deny the essential difference, and therefore the importance in some cases of studies on rats, and decisionmaking of rats, and deliberations of rats, and so on, which from the other point of view would not be expected to be very enlightening. Now this much in order to fulfill my duty towards those of you who are political scientists and are not satisfied with the fact that the *Meno* is a book which makes us think and understand, and [who] would like to see a more immediate connection with political science.

Now I turn again to the *Meno,* to the point where we left off. Socrates, you will recall, has led Meno to see that virtue is either identical with prudence or has prudence as its core. But prudence is a kind of knowledge, and therefore, if we are a bit generous in making a syllogism, virtue is knowledge. Hence,[8] [being] knowledge, it must be teachable. But if it is teachable, there must be teachers of virtue. Are there teachers of virtue? This was the point, I think, where we left off, and we'll go on here in 89e6, following. We read this last time, but let us read it again to have the connection.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I must say I have often inquired whether there were any, but for all my pains I cannot find one [teacher of virtue—DR]. And yet many have shared the search with me, and particularly those persons whom I regard as best qualified for the task. But look, Meno: here, at the very moment when he was wanted, we have Anytus sitting down beside us, to take his share in our quest. And we may well ask his assistance; for Anytus [here][ii], in the first place, is the son of a wise and wealthy father, Anthemion, who became rich not by a fluke or a gift—like that man the other day, Ismenias the Theban, who has come into the fortune of a Polycrates—but as the product of his own skill and industry; and secondly, he [Anytus's papa—DR] has the name of being in general a well-conducted, mannerly person, not insolent towards his fellow-citizens or arrogant and annoying; and further, he gave his son a good upbringing and education, as the Athenian people think, for they choose him for the highest offices.[iii]

LS: Or literally, "as at any rate the multitude of the Athenians think."

Mr. Reinken:

> the many of the Athenians think, for they choose him for the highest offices. This is the sort of man to whom one may look for help in the inquiry as to whether there are teachers of virtue or not, and who they may be. (89e6-90b4)

[ii] In original: "Our friend Anytus." Mr. Reinken, who is again looking at the Greek, perceives that it says no more than "Anytus over here."

[iii] "DR" refers to Donald Reinken, whose interpolations are enclosed in square brackets.

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So here a new scene begins, a new insertion; just as we had the insertion of the conversation with the slave boy, we have now the insertion of the dialogue with Anytus. But whereas the slave scene was initiated by Socrates—Is there any of your slaves around who speak Greek?—here it is an act of *tychē,* of chance. Anytus suddenly appears out of a blue sky. Anytus is best known to us as the chief accuser of Socrates. He should be in a position to know, or rather to help in finding out whether there are teachers of virtue, for he is the son of a father who is surely wealthy (there can be no doubt about that) but apparently also good, who brought his son up well. Socrates doesn't say who taught him virtue (he avoids that) but [his father] raised him and educated him.[9] This is then the man who should be in the position to tell us.[10] We have to make this quite clear, that Anytus's father is a *nouveau riche*, ya? He is a self-made man who by his own cleverness acquired this wealth, which from a social point of view is not a distinction, because generally speaking people thought people of old wealth are better than people of new wealth. If you'd like to know more about that, then read the chapter on wealth in Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* where he speaks about the differences between the men of old wealth and those of new wealth.[iv] Yes. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

> So please, Anytus, join with me and your family-friend Meno in our inquiry about this matter—who can be the teachers. (90b4-6)

LS: So you see Anytus also belongs to Meno, not in the way in which the slave belongs to him, as a piece of property, but as his guest friend. You know there were no hotels in the way in which we have now; you had to stay, if you wanted to stay comfortably [in a foreign city],[11] with a guest friend in that city and he would stay in your house when he came to yours. So the two other characters then of whom we hear, the slave and Anytus, belong to Meno, but [each] in a different way. One can, as will appear very soon, [see that] Anytus belongs to Meno much more than the slave belongs. The slave belongs in a way to Socrates. They were friends for this short scene, and there is an external sign of that: there are a number of oaths which occur throughout the dialogue, and if you draw up a list of them you will see that[12] the oaths of Socrates are of the same number as those of the slave, namely, two; whereas Meno swears four times and Anytus swears four times. And this is a minor indication confirming what we would see, I think, anyway. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Is there any significance to the fact that Meno has another guest friend?[13] [Isn't he] the Persian Great King, the enemy of Greece?

LS: That is surely also interesting, but he is not a character in the present play—as a matter of fact, in no play of Plato. Good, now let us see,[14] how does Socrates begin the conversation with Anytus?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Consider it thus: if we wanted Meno here to be a good doctor, to whom should we send him for instruction? Would it not be to the doctors?

[iv] *Rhetoric* 1390b32-1391a19.

[AN.] Certainly.

LS: You see[15] [that] Socrates is an old man; Anytus is surely older than Meno. And they have a kind of uncle-like interest in this young man and so they would send him, and there is no question of what Meno would like to do. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[SOC.] And if we wanted him to become a good shoemaker[v], should we not send him to the shoemakers?
[AN.] Yes.
[MEN.] And in the same way with every other trade?
[AN.] Certainly.

LS: Yes, now these two arts which he mentions here, the physician and the shoemakers, do they have anything in common? Pardon?

Student: They repair something that is worn, that is bad[16].

LS: Yes, that is true. But one can say it perhaps a bit more precisely. They protect the body: one against disease, the other against hardships arising from the ground. And they are here for certain reasons preferred. We may see [why that is so][17] later. Yes?[18]

Mr. Reinken:[19]

Now let me ask you something more about these same instances. We should be right, we say, in sending him to the doctors it we wanted him to be a doctor. When we say this, do we mean that we should be wise in sending him to those who profess the art rather than those who do not, and to those who charge a fee for the particular thing they do, as avowed teachers of anyone who wishes to come and learn of them? If these were our reasons, should we not be right in sending him?
[AN.] Yes. (90b7-d6)

LS: So in other words, the action of sending Meno to either the physicians or the shoemakers[20] is a sensible action on two grounds: because the men in question claim to be teachers of the art concerned, and they take fees for it. This is the criterion. And we will see what Socrates, naughty Socrates, does with this admission. The question is,[21] obviously: Is the same true of teachers of virtue, that they stand in the marketplace as it were and say: I teach virtue for a fee? We must see whether there are such people at all. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

[SOC.] And the same would hold in the case of flute-playing, and so on with the rest? What folly, when we wanted to make someone a flute-player, to refuse to send him to the professed teachers of the art, who charge a regular fee, and to bother with requests for instruction other people who neither set up to be teachers

[v] In original: "cobbler," and at the end of the question, "cobblers."

> nor have a single pupil in that sort of study which we expect him, when sent, to pursue! Do you not consider this would be grossly unreasonable?
> [AN.] Yes, on my word, I do, and stupid to boot.
> [SOC.] Quite right. (90 d7–e10)

LS: Let us stop here. So he takes now an example of another art: flute-playing. Flute-playing is of course not an art which protects the body, although its coming in here as the third of the arts mentioned brings shoemaking into the center. Shoemaking is an art protecting the body, but it was not a very highly respected art because they didn't have to have great bodily strength to be a shoemaker. [22][Shoemakers] were working at home, therefore pale-faced, not ruddy-faced, no color of virtue—you remember the question of color and virtue which we took up before.[23] The art of flute-playing is a music[al] art, which has this peculiarity: that it cannot be exercised while one speaks.[24] In other words, it is literally a speechless art. You[25] have to be silent while flute-playing. The terms of disapproval, of when one sends some young man to someone who doesn't raise these two conditions mentioned, are now much stronger than in the preceding statement. Socrates and Anytus are in full agreement up to this point. Yes, and now what is the issue raised?

Mr. Reinken:

> And now there is an opportunity of your joining me in consultation on my friend Meno here. He—

LS: No, not "my friend," that is very bad. "On the guest friend," "on this guest friend here, Meno." He is of course not Socrates's—"mine"—but Anytus's.[26] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> on this guest, Meno here. He has been declaring to me ever so long, Anytus, that he desires to have that wisdom and virtue whereby men keep their house or their city in good order, and honour their parents, and know when to welcome and when to speed citizens and strangers as befits a good man. Now tell me, to whom ought we properly to send him for lessons in this virtue? (90e10-91b2)

LS: "In this virtue." Yes. Now the previous exchange with Anytus was based on the assumption that "we," namely, Socrates and Anytus, wish to make Meno a physician or a shoemaker, something which Meno did not wish in any way, of course. Now Socrates turns to what Meno himself wishes—after all, the young man must have a say in the choice of his profession, what he wishes to become. Meno does not desire to become proficient in any *technē*, in any art, any craft, but in a certain kind of wisdom and virtue—not practical wisdom: wisdom, *sophia*. Or more simply, Socrates himself makes this simplification in [claiming that Meno seeks] a certain kind of virtue. That is what allegedly Meno had told him all the time. On the face of it, it is of course an untruth, but Socrates takes the liberty to describe as said by Meno what Socrates in a way divines, has seen through. That simplifies matters greatly. Socrates imputes to Meno a desire for that virtue, which means an awareness of a need which Meno apparently does not yet possess. But this is nevertheless not altogether wrong, because Meno is troubled by the possibility that Gorgias was wrong [or] might be wrong regarding the need for having teaching in

virtue. We have read that passage before. You see, when he describes this wisdom and virtue, Socrates mentions one point which we know already from Meno's first answer to the question of what virtue is, [that] by which men administer finely their houses and cities.[27] And then there is something new: that they—[28][virtuous men, as] translated a little bit freely—honor their parents. Meno hadn't said a word about that. This is a sheer imputation on Socrates's part. He makes Meno better, much better than he is. But this has another implication: worshiping the parents. He does not impute to Meno that Meno has any desire to worship the gods. That is tacitly excluded. Meno has nothing whatever to do with piety. And Socrates, even in this overstatement about Meno's desire, does not make any suggestion of this kind. Yes. Good. But it is important that Meno does not object to this statement of Socrates. He could easily have done so [and said]: No, no, I don't want to do that; I only want to have the art of how to rule cities. Good.[29] So silence can be construed as consent. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> Or is it clear enough, from our argument just now, that he should go to these men who profess to be the[vi] teachers of virtue and advertise themselves as the common teachers of the Greeks, and are ready to instruct anyone who chooses in return for fees charged on a fixed scale?

LS: Yes. Now is this not the conclusion we must draw from the examples of the physicians, etc., that we must send Meno to those who claim to be teachers of virtue? Now the qualification of that virtue, or that kind of virtue, is not drawn. [Socrates speaks here of] teachers of virtue *tout court*, and who teach it for pay. Is it not a necessary consequence, given these premises? Yes. And then what is Anytus's reply to that?

Mr. Reinken:

> To whom are you referring, Socrates?

LS: So in other words, the agreement between Socrates and Anytus has come to an end. To use a very common phrase, Anytus smells a rat. [Laughter] Yes. Now this will be made very clear in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Surely you know as well as anyone; they are the men whom people call sophists.

LS: Yes. Now Socrates makes now clear what kind of men he has in mind, the so-called sophists. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [AN.] By Heracles,[vii] hold your tongue, Socrates! May no kinsman or friend of mine, whether of this city or another, be seized with such madness as to let

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[vi] The Loeb does not include this definite article.

[vii] In original: "For heaven's sake." Mr. Reinken is aware of Strauss's concern with the accurate rendering of oaths. However, in 90e8 he follows the Loeb in mistranslating the oath.

> himself be infected with the company of those men; for they are a manifest plague and corruption to those who frequent them. (91b2-c5)

LS: So if we may labor the point a bit, the sophists are so far from being teachers of virtue that they are the greatest corrupters. They are the teachers of vice. Anytus is concerned only with the well being of his friends, as you see from this remark. Being a gentleman in the ordinary sense, he regards[30] sees virtue as helping one's friends and hurting the enemies, or at least not[31] [hurting] friends. This point was made in Meno's first definition in 71e4. Anytus surely will not help Socrates to persuade Meno to turn to the sophists, and therefore Socrates will not be able to advise Meno to turn from Gorgias, his previous teacher, to Protagoras, or the type Protagoras, who represents the alternative to Gorgias. I trust you remember this point I made in the last meeting. Yes, Mr. Lewin.

Mr. Lewin: The phrase that Socrates uses a little while back about governing well one's home and one's city—

LS: That[32] also was asked.

Mr. Lewin: Protagoras claims that that is what he teaches.

LS: Sure,[33] that is the Protagorean view, naturally. No, I made it clear last time that the doubt which Meno entertained before he came to Socrates was whether Gorgias was right, who said that this cannot be taught, or Protagoras, i.e., the sophists, who claim that it can be taught. That is the point in the argument where we are now. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Why is it that when Socrates says to Anytus that in order to teach Meno how to become a doctor we'll send him to people who teach medicine, assuming that those who teach medicine are the same as those who practice medicine; the same with cobblers, and on down the line until you come to virtuous men? Now surely one could object at any point, saying that those who teach and those who practice don't have to be the same.

LS: No,[34] [but in those days] there were no (what is the word?) medical faculties in which there were people who taught medicine without necessarily practicing medicine; although I believe that is still the exception, as far as I know, even today. But[35] are there not business schools in which people teach business without engaging in business, or without being supposed to engage in it? Is this not true? So could there not be also institutions in which you teach people shoemaking without [practicing it, i.e., where] the teacher does not engage in shoemaking [but] only teaches? But however this may be today, in this more simple civilization the teachers of the arts were the same as the artisans. The master of the craft had his apprentice. And the application to the teachers of virtue is clear. I mean, you wouldn't send someone, would you, to a man who says he teaches virtue without ever practicing it? No, I mean, that would be madness.

Mr. Butterworth: No, no, but[36] rather than sending him to those who claim to teach virtue, [why not], say, send him to the statesman who is virtuous?

LS: But how do you know?[37] The analogy of the arts shows this that in such cases you look first for those who hang out the shingle, and then if they should prove to be inadequate, then indeed you have to find an alternative. We'll come to this alternative very soon. Yes?

Student: To follow that up a bit, the change in the oath from Zeus, who is kind of a ruler,[38] [to] Heracles, [by whom Anytus swears].

LS:[39] Ya. No, that is a kind of averting evil—Heracles.

Same Student: I see.

LS: Something of this kind, ya. And[40] [as for] the other oath (hold your tongue) you are talking about, it means also *euphēmei, fave lingua* . . .

Student: Isn't Gorgias a sophist too, or—?

LS: Well, in the key point Gorgias is not a sophist. Gorgias is a teacher of rhetoric. And the lines are not very clearly drawn, but in a wider sense of the word, he would of course be counted among the sophists. I do not remember now whether he is ever called by Plato in the Platonic dialogues a sophist, but one can make the distinction: a teacher of rhetoric as distinguished from a teacher of virtue. And in the *Gorgias* itself a distinction is made between the rhetorical art or sham art and the sophistical art or sham art as two different things. So[41] we must make this distinction surely when reading the *Meno*. Whether it is universally useful is left open. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: Does Anytus's statement have the form of a prayer or just a wish?

LS: Yes. A prayer is too strong. But *fave lingua*—how do you translate that into English? *Euphēmei*. Keep reverent silence, but also don't commit blasphemy. Blasphemy is the opposite of *euphēmei*. "Don't commit an act of blasphemy. It's a terrible thing which you say." Yes, now shall we go on here?

Mr. Reinken:

> What are you saying, Anytus?[viii] Of all the people who set up to understand how to do us good, do you mean to single out these as conveying not merely no benefit, such as the rest can give, but actually corruption to anyone placed in their hands? And is it for doing this that they openly claim the payment of fees? For my part I cannot bring myself to believe you; for I know of one man, Protagoras, who amassed more money by his craft than Pheidias—

LS: Ya, the word used here is wisdom, *sophia*. Yes?

[viii] In original: "What is this, Anytus?"

Mr. Reinken:

> his wisdom, than Pheidias—so famous for the noble works he produced—or any ten other sculptors. And yet how surprising that menders of old shoes and furbishers of clothes should not be able to go undetected thirty days if they should return the clothes or shoes in worse condition than they received them, and that such doings on their part would quickly starve them to death, while for more than forty years all Greece failed to notice that Protagoras was corrupting his classes and sending his pupils away in a worse state then when he took charge of them! For I believe he died about seventy years old, forty of which he spent in the practice of his art; and he retains undiminished to this day the high reputation he has enjoyed all that time—and not only Protagoras, but a multitude of others too: some who lived before him, and others still living. Now are we to take it, according to you, that they wittingly deceived and corrupted the youth, or that they were themselves unconscious of it? Are we to conclude those who are frequently termed the wisest of mankind to have been so demented as that? (91c6-92a6)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates refutes Anytus's view, namely, that the sophists are impossible as teachers of virtue. The sophists corrupt the youth, their pupils. That is said. They must do it either wittingly or unwittingly. Now if unwittingly, then they do not know what they do. They are not wise.[42] If they do it wittingly, they are in a sense still greater fools because in that case they cannot even trust their pupils that they will pay the fee. After all, the people paid at the end, and if he makes them unjust in the meantime, how impractical. [Laughter] So[43] the prejudice against the sophists is not well founded, it seems. Why does he speak here in about the first half of that passage of the makers of[44] old shoes and the healers of old clothes? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Because education is remodeling rather than creation *ex nihilo*.

LS: Yes, that indeed he must mean, otherwise it wouldn't make sense. But can you develop this a bit further?

Mr. Reinken: Well,[45] the sophist gets the young men at eighteen or so[46], when they have a particular set of virtues or non-virtue.

LS: Ya, they had undergone an education, so they have already been worn, if we may compare them with shoes. They have already taken on an education, and the sophists take over the young men who have already been molded by their parents or by the city. And therefore education of people this age is re-education. This question is beautifully illustrated by what is said at the end of the seventh book of the *Republic*, where Socrates says[47] in effect: What I said before, namely, that the good city will not come into being if the philosophers do not become kings or the kings philosophers, is not sufficient; in addition, everyone older than ten must be expelled from the city because they are no longer good. We have to begin from scratch, and we can't begin with old shoes; we must begin with new shoes. Good.

So Socrates has refuted Anytus up to this point, as we see, and defended the sophists. Now how does Anytus react?

Mr. Reinken: "Demented!"

LS: No, what do you think?

Mr. Butterworth: Why is it that Protagoras has wisdom?[48] He at first has wisdom and then he has a craft? Now wisdom isn't the mental faculty that goes with having an art or a craft.

LS: Well, you must not forget that all these words have for good reasons a great variety and a great range of meaning. Now if a man earns so much money, more than ten Pheidiases, he must be a clever man; there is no doubt about that, because it's obvious that he didn't win it in a sweepstake.[49] Also, by the way, winning in a sweepstake is not enough, because that can be spent very easily. There are so many people around who would relieve him of the burden, and he would fall [an] easy victim to them unless he is wise [and] doesn't trust these people who want to take his money away from him. So every man who possesses money or large sums of money, say, for more than an hour or more than a day, has some wisdom. And for some people this is the only kind of wisdom of which they know. Don't you know that?

Mr. Butterworth: But knowing Socrates, this wouldn't be the wisdom. He wouldn't call this wisdom.

LS: Why not? It all depends on to whom he talks. After all, he wants to be understood. And then if it becomes necessary to investigate whether that is true wisdom, as for example in the *Protagoras*, and there[50] he investigates it, [keeping in mind all these facts]. But here he talks to Anytus, and Anytus, with his prejudice against the sophists, must be liberated from these prejudices as far as it is a mere prejudice, as it is in this case. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Demented! Not they, Socrates: far rather the young men who pay them money, and still more the relations who let the young men have their way; and most of all the cities that allow them to enter, and do not expel them, whether such attempt be made by stranger or citizen.

LS: "Or citizens." Ya. So the sophists are very far from being foolish or mad; they are very clever, cunning fellows. Truly foolish are above all the cities which do not expel them, regardless of whether they are foreigners—as most of them are—or citizens, like Socrates. That is of course the meaning. Socrates was the arch-sophist, who was a citizen of Athens. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Tell me, Anytus, has any of the sophists wronged you? What makes you so hard on them?
> [AN.] No, heaven knows I have never in my life had dealings with any of them, nor would I let any of my people have to do with them either.
> [SOC.] Then you have absolutely no experience of those persons?
> [AN.] And trust I never may.
> [SOC.] How then, my good sir— (92a-c)

LS: All right. That's a terrible translation, but go on.

Mr. Reinken: All right, "Daimonic one," literally.

LS: Ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> can you tell whether a thing has any good or evil in it, if you are quite without experience of it?
> [AN.] Easily: the fact is, I know what these people are, whether I have experience of them or not.
> [SOC.] You are a wizard, perhaps, Anytus— [Laughter]

LS: "A wizard," yes. "Diviner." When he uses the word *ō daimonie* before—"you daimonic man"—this points already to that, you know. Socrates claimed to have a daimonic thing, and in the widest sense this means that Socrates had a gift of foresight,[51] a daimonic gift. And here he calls Anytus daimonic; you see how relevant these little adjectives, or vocatives, are. Only in this case he spells it out afterwards: If you speak about something of which you have no experience whatever, then you must be a daimonic man, a man with a divinely inspired foresight; otherwise you couldn't possibly know anything about that. Yes, now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> You are a diviner,[ix] perhaps, Anytus; for I really cannot see, from what you say yourself, how else you can know anything about them. But we are not inquiring now who the teachers are whose lessons would make Meno wicked; let us grant, if you will, that they are the sophists: I only ask you to tell us, and do Meno a service as a friend of your family by letting him know, to whom in all this great city he should apply in order to become eminent in the virtue which I described just now.

LS: You see, now again "this" [virtue]: there are various kinds of virtues. Meno should become proficient in the virtue, in that kind of virtue which Socrates described, including honoring the parents and so on. Now let us grant that the sophists are corrupters, although Anytus, you have not proved that. Who are the ones in Athens to whom Meno should go in order to become remarkable in that kind of virtue which was described? Socrates does not speak here of teachers of virtues,[52] for only the sophists *claim* to be teachers of

[ix] In original: "wizard."

virtues. But there may be other men who are teachers of virtue without claiming to be teachers. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [AN.] Why not tell him yourself?
> [SOC.] I did mention to him the men whom I supposed to be teachers of these things; but I find, from what you say, that I am quite off the track, and I daresay you are on it. Now you take your turn, and tell him to whom of the Athenians he is to go. Give us a name—anyone you please. (92a7-e2)

LS: Socrates knows no other teachers of this kind of virtue than the sophists. But perhaps Anytus is right in regarding the sophists as corrupters, and it is therefore clearly Anytus's turn to say which Athenians are, in brackets, teachers of this kind of virtue. The word[53] [virtue] is not used by Socrates, but that is suggested. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [AN.] Why mention a particular one? Any Athenian gentleman he comes across, without exception, will do him more good, if he will do as he is bid, than the sophists.

LS: Yes. So every Athenian gentleman is surely better—understand "as a teacher of virtue"—than the sophists. Anytus doesn't call the gentlemen teachers of virtues, of course, but for two reasons: they do not take money; and secondly, they are not teachers, as is indicated by what he says at the end here: listening to a gentleman is of course not enough; you must also do what they say. And that[54] shows the limitations of this kind of teaching. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And did those gentlemen grow spontaneously into what they are, and without learning from anybody are they able, nevertheless, to teach others what they did not learn themselves?

LS: Yes. These men learned—these gentlemen teach in a way virtue, and they can do it only because they have learned it originally. But from whom?

Mr. Reinken:

> I expect they must have learnt in their turn from the older generation, who were gentlemen: or does it not seem to you that we have had many good men in this city? (92e3-93a4)

LS: So the present gentlemen have learned it from the earlier gentlemen. And then[55] there is a long regress. Let us make the long story short. From whom did the first Athenian gentleman learn virtue? Not from an Athenian gentleman. That is clear, ya? That is impossible. That is like Aristotle's criticism of the common definition of a citizen: a citizen is the son of a citizen father and a citizen mother. But according to that definition, the first founders could not have been citizens. And that is the same thing. But from

whom could the first Athenian gentlemen have learned it? From whom could they have learned it?

Mr. Reinken: The gods.

LS: Yes. That's a possibility. But of course [it is] in no way mentioned here. But we must keep our ears to the ground. Yes?

Student: Wouldn't the most obvious answer be the laws?

LS: But where do the laws come from? Either they are man-made—

Student: From the legislator.

LS: [56]Then all right, but then there would be—that would only bring it back: Where did the legislator learn the legislative art? Good.

Mr. Reinken: It's also a joke that Anytus, the son of a tanner, is making such a thing about old families, old traditions.

LS: Yes. That would not be peculiar to this *nouveau riche*. Good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> many good men in this city?
> [SOC.] Yes, I agree, Anytus; we have also many who are good at politics, and have had them in the past as well as now. But I want to know whether they have proved good teachers besides of their own virtue: that is the question with which our discussion is actually concerned; not whether there are, or formerly have been, good men here amongst us or not, but whether virtue is teachable; this has been our problem all the time. And our inquiry into this problem resolves itself into the question: Did the good men of our own and of former times know how to transmit to another man the virtue in respect of which they were good—

LS: "That virtue." One could almost say "that kind of virtue."

Mr. Reinken:

> that kind of virtue in respect of which they were good, or is it something not to be transmitted or taken over from one human being to another? That is the question I and Meno have been discussing all this time. (93a5-b6)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now we see Socrates corrects Anytus again: there were in Athens men good in political things. That's a more literal translation. But were they able to teach this kind of virtue, let us say statesmanship? For we are concerned with finding out whether virtue is teachable. Now virtue and statesmanship are not simply identical, obviously. Then a slave would be a statesman—a good slave would be a statesman. But what is implied is this: If[57] virtue as such is teachable, then of course all kinds of virtue

are teachable; and therefore Socrates can switch back and forth from virtue simply to a kind of virtue as he does. Teachable means here transmittable, susceptible of being handed over, being handed down from the ancestors to posterity. In order to bring this out quite clearly, I will use an adjective which to my knowledge doesn't exist in the English language: traditionable, being handed over by tradition. And that is of course not teachable strictly speaking; that's only by memory.

Now let us here summarize for one moment the vaguenesses and ambiguities which occur in the second half of the dialogue. First, is virtue knowledge, science, or prudence? And if it is prudence, is it identical with prudence, or is prudence only a necessary ingredient of virtue? Prudence is said to be the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. But what is happiness? Does happiness consist in philosophizing, as is said in the *Republic*, for example? Yet philosophizing is not possible for all men; so there must be another kind of happiness and there must be another kind of virtue. And this other kind seems to consist at least of two parts: that of the good statesman, and that of the good average citizen. And therefore the question is, more precisely: Since the first kind of virtue is not considered, is this latter kind of virtue teachable, or can it only be transmitted by tradition? These obscurities remain,[58] [but] we will be able to clear them up when we are through with the dialogue. Now shall we go on here, or is there any point. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: The starting point for considering whether virtue is teachable was in the immediate context the identification of virtue and some kind of knowledge.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Bruell: But as soon as the discussion with Anytus begins, Socrates completely drops that, and—

LS: It's a condition, I mean, that virtue is knowledge.

Mr. Bruell: Yes.

LS: Ya. But here[59] they have settled to their satisfaction that virtue is knowledge. But they have one great difficulty: if it is knowledge there must be teachers. And this is the only question discussed with Anytus: Are there teachers of virtue? The sophists are excluded by Anytus, whether wisely or on sufficient grounds or not is another matter. And then there is a discussion of the alternative, namely, the most outstanding and most respectable Athenian citizens, and that we are discussing now. We come back to this question; it will be taken up again. Good. Yes?

Student: The problem of regress that you mentioned—

LS: What?

Same Student: Of regress, of the original teachers. It seems to me that Socrates sort of hints at that when he asks where the gentlemen learned it. Did they learn from no one but can they nevertheless teach other people what they themselves never learned? But Anytus misses it completely; he misses the reference to learning, to teaching what you have never learned.

LS: I don't see your difficulty.

Same Student: Well, I think it's about 93a.

LS: I know the passage. That is 92e7. All right. Now did the gentlemen become such gentlemen by accident, not having learned it at all from anyone, and yet are able to teach it and hence able to do that which they themselves have not learned?

Same Student: Well, isn't he there referring to the problem of regress because he's saying: Is it possible for a man to teach something that he never even learned? That's the same as: Who taught it originally?

LS: Ya.[60] But the question of the regress comes through Anytus's answer. They have learned it from the earlier gentlemen. Ya? It doesn't come in on the basis of Socrates's arguments.

Same Student: I realize that Anytus's answer brings up that question, but it seems to me that Socrates's comment—Socrates's question that elicits Anytus's answer sort of prepares us for the problem of regress, but Anytus doesn't see it.

LS: Well, does not Socrates suggest perhaps something else, that there might be another way of becoming a perfect gentleman without having learned it? I mean by *apo tautomatou,* by accident, without any special procedure. And[61] Anytus excludes that. No, there is no way of becoming virtuous except by learning virtue from gentlemen. Yes. Good. Where were we now? In 93b6.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, just consider it in your own way of speaking: would you not say that Themistocles was a good man?
> [AN.] I would, particularly so.
> [SOC.] And if any man ever was a teacher of his own virtue, he especially was a good teacher of his?
> [AN.] In my opinion, yes, assuming that he wished to be so.

LS: No, "that he wished." In other words, he could have taught easily if he wished, but he might have been more interested in something else. Now the question again concerns the virtue of a man simply, not that particular kind of virtue, [but] virtue of a man in general. And Anytus says that Themistocles could have been a teacher—who was notoriously a man of virtue—could have been a teacher of virtue if he wished. If he was not too busy

with political affairs, say, with campaigning or whatever else belongs to that, then he might have become a good teacher. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] But can you suppose he would not have wished that other people should become good, honourable men—

LS: That is "perfect gentlemen."[62] Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> above all, I presume, his own son? Or do you think he was jealous of him, and deliberately refused to impart the virtue of his own goodness to him? Have you never heard how Themistocles had his son Cleophantus taught to be a good horseman? Why, he could keep his balance standing upright on horseback, and hurl the javelin while so standing, and perform many other wonderful feats in which his father had had him trained, so as to make him skilled in all that could be learnt from good masters. Surely you must have heard all this from your elders?
> [AN.] I have.
> [SOC.] Then there could be no complaints of badness in his son's nature?

LS: Yes. Socrates proves that Themistocles wished to make his son a gentleman, an outstanding man.[63] That he wished to hand him down that virtue which he, Themistocles, possessed, that goes without saying. I mean, can a father, and especially such an outstanding father like Themistocles, fail to do that? And then he proves in passing that the son surely had a good nature,[64] good natural equipment for acquiring virtue. Proof: because he was such an excellent horseman. But the proof is not beyond reproach. But one point is of utmost importance: Socrates reminds us again that nature is important. So even if virtue might be teachable, [it] might not be teachable to everybody. You must have a specific equipment for that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] But I ask you—did you ever hear anybody old or young say that Cleophantus—

LS: No, first [read] Anytus's answer to Socrates's preceding question.

Mr. Reinken: "I daresay not."

LS: But the Greek is ambiguous, literally translated "perhaps not." So Anytus perhaps divines what is coming and is not so sure whether Themistocles's son did have a good nature. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] But I ask you—did you ever hear anybody, old or young, say that Cleophantus, son of Themistocles, had the same goodness and accomplishments as his father?

> [AN.] Certainly not.
> [SOC.] And can we believe that his father chose to train his own son in those feats, and yet made him no better than his neighbours in his own particular accomplishments—

LS: "Wisdom."

Mr. Reinken: "[wisdom]—if virtue, as alleged, was to be taught?"

LS: "Was teachable." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

> was [teachable]?
> [AN.] [By Zeus][x], I think not. (93b6-e9)

LS: Also with this slight qualification, "perhaps," which can be only a polite form of saying yes, but can also be literally understood. I don't know. Themistocles did not succeed in transmitting his virtue, his wisdom to his son, and yet that son had a good nature. And Themistocles had the best will. Hence it follows: virtue is not teachable. Good. But we are not yet through; there may be other examples.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, there you have a fine teacher of virtue who, you admit, was one of the best men of past times. Let us take another, Aristeides, son of Lysimachus: do you not admit that he was a good man?
> [AN.] I do, absolutely, of course.
> [SOC.] Well, did he not train his son Lysimachus better than any other Athenian in all that masters could teach him? And in the result, do you consider he has turned out better than anyone else? You have been in his company, I know, and you see what he is like.

LS: Yes. Now the same is true of Aristeides the Just, you know the paragon of the old-fashioned Athenians, [whereas] Themistocles [was] in a way the founder of the democracy.[65] Now the son of Aristeides is a mediocre fellow, and everyone knows that; and we can easily know it be reading Plato's *Laches*, where Lysimachus is one of the characters. The conclusion that virtue is perhaps not teachable is here not stated. That is interesting because to be a mediocre fellow, not outstanding like Aristides, does not mean simply to lack virtue. After all, can there not be such a thing as the virtue of a simple, average, mediocre man? Could there not be an average virtue proper for mediocre natures and which is perhaps teachable, and which perhaps Aristides taught his son? This question is only implied but not developed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

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[x] In original: "on my word." Mr. Reinken translated the oath literally.

> Or take another example—the splendidly wise[xi] Pericles: he, as you are aware, brought up two sons, Paralus and Xanthippus.

LS: Now you see here Socrates states his own view of Pericles. This can be ironical; we never know. But still, on the face of it he praises him very highly. He did not do this in the case of the virtue of the two preceding men, Themistocles and Aristides, and so in a way Pericles is a test case. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [AN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And, you know as well as I, he taught them to be the foremost horsemen of Athens, and trained them to excel in music and gymnastics and all else that comes under the head of the arts; and with all that, had he no desire to make them good men? He wished to, I imagine, but presumably it is not a thing one can be taught.

LS: So Pericles was very concerned with educating these two sons (he had others, about whom Socrates is silent) in everything teachable. But virtue is not teachable. And the question of the natures of these sons is not raised in the cases of the sons of Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides, but we have to raise it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> And that you may not suppose it was only a few of the meanest sort of Athenians who failed in this matter—

LS: That is very grave, because who were the Athenians we have hitherto discussed? The greatest men: Themistocles and Pericles, surely. These three great men belong perhaps to the most inferior Athenians, the lowest class,[66] and the implication would of course be this: they did not teach their sons virtue. Why? The simple explanation, wholly unmetaphysical.

Student: They don't have it.

LS: They lacked it themselves. That is of course not stated here, but clearly implied. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> only a few of the meanest sort of Athenians who failed in this matter, let me remind you that Thucydides also brought up two sons, Melesias and Stephanus, and that besides giving them a good general education he made them the best wrestlers in Athens: one he placed with Xanthias, and the other with Eudorus—masters who, I should think, had the name of being the best exponents of the art. You remember them, do you not?
> [AN.] Yes, by hearsay.

[xi] In original: "accomplished." Mr. Reinken is looking at the Greek word *sophos*.

LS: Thucydides of course not the historian, but also a leader of the aristocratic faction in the generation of Pericles—the opponent of Pericles. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Well, is it not obvious that this father would never have spent his money on having his children taught all those things, and then have omitted to teach them at no expense the others that would have made them good men, if virtue was teachable[xii]? Will you say that perhaps Thucydides was one of the meaner sort—

LS: Ya, "an inferior man," let us say.

Mr. Reinken:

> inferior man, and had no great number of friends among the Athenians and allies? He, who was of a great house and had much influence in our city and all over Greece, so that if virtue were teachable[xiii] he would have found out the man who was likely to make his sons good, whether one of our own people or a foreigner, were he himself too busy owing to the cares of state! Ah no, my dear Anytus, it looks as though virtue were not a teachable thing. (93e10-94e2)

LS: Yes. Now Thucydides was obviously in a class by himself. That comes out from the context here. Yet he failed as much as the meanest Athenians mentioned before. Virtue is not teachable; that is the inevitable conclusion. Anytus[67] knows of Thucydides only from hearsay, as you have seen. Well, this is an old family, and Anytus does not belong to these circles so he knows only from hearsay. But Socrates knows, of course, as you see, the whole gossip of Athens. You must have noticed that. Now one must contrast the description of Thucydides with that of Anytus's father: you know Anytus's father was such a nice man but *nouveau riche*, self-made, and Thucydides is truly old wealth. Yes. Klein makes here a point[68] which I do not think is right, [on] page 232. It's not a very important point. "The implication seems to be," he says at the end of the[69] third[xiv] paragraph, "The implication seems to be that Thucydides, luckily enough, would not have needed to remunerate such a man," because these friends would of course have educated the sons *gratis*. Now I think the reason is simpler. The sophists are of course excluded; and a gentleman like Thucydides would give his sons perhaps to a friend of the same social standing to bring them up, and not to a sophist. But that is trivial and we can forget about it. Yes. Now let us read the next point, and then we must make a pause.

Mr. Reinken:

> [AN.] Socrates, I consider you are too apt to speak ill of people. I, for one, if you will take my advice, would warn you to be careful: in most cities it is probably easier to do people harm than good, and particularly in this one; I think you know that yourself. (94e3-95a1)

[xii] In original: "to be taught."
[xiii] Ibid.
[xiv] Strauss means the fifth paragraph.

LS: Let us stop here. So Anytus is angry at Socrates slandering the most outstanding Athenians, and of course that means also him. He does not believe, as Meno did, that it cannot happen here (you know, in Athens), for he belongs to those men who can make it happen here, as he proved very soon. Anytus is angry at the implication that the Athenian gentlemen are no wit better than the sophists in the best case.

Now this Anytus scene, which we have now completed reading, [70]is a parallel to the scene with the slave, obviously. The slave scene leads to *euporia*, to a state of wealth, contentedness, satisfaction of the desire. The problem was solved. The Anytus scene leads to or confirms an *aporia*, a paralysis, which existed before. Socrates can teach the slave, that he has shown. He cannot teach Anytus. He cannot even persuade Anytus. Who can possibly persuade Anytus? Who? Is any guess possible? Pardon?

Student: Meno.

LS: That is exactly what happens at the end of the dialogue, where Socrates at least regards it as possible that[71] Meno might persuade Anytus. Yes?

Student: You say that Anytus at least thought of himself as being a great Athenian, and yet he had a guest, he had Meno as a guest and Meno is considered to be an arch-villain.

LS:[72] You see, that is a difficult question. For example, when you see some of these trials, you know, where all kinds of people—some have famous names; for example, let us take Bill Estes,[xv] because that is an issue which has been decided. I think [that] he was no better than he is now when he did these things, when he moved in the best circles in the country. But things looked very differently; no one would have dared to suggest that he is a corrupt man, you know? And so[73] Meno is not visibly a crook; that is the point. Socrates discerns it—smells it perhaps; that is a long question which we have to reconsider later. But that is, I think, quite clear. And in addition, what you regard as a non-gentleman depends on your notion of a gentleman. And perhaps Anytus is more permissive than others. That we must see.

Now there are two claimants, two kinds of claimants to be teachers of virtue: the sophists and the gentlemen (and in this case, the Athenian gentlemen). The claim of the sophists is rejected by Anytus without argument. The claim of the gentlemen is disposed of by Socrates through argument. The obvious conclusion: the sophists come[74] off [better] than the gentlemen.[75] There is not a thing said [against them], except the general prejudice against the sophists. Meno is somehow in between the gentlemen and the sophists, because Meno does not simply reject the sophists. You know, he is uncertain, whereas[76] [Anytus] rejects them. And the sophists do not know what virtue is, as is shown especially in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*. Nor do the Athenian gentlemen: they would be in the same troubles in which Meno is in that dialogue. They would not forget justice, but

[xv] The financier Billy Sol Estes (1924-2013) was a close associate of President Lyndon Johnson. However, his numerous Ponzi schemes pertaining to the Texas agriculture business collapsed in 1962, and he was convicted of fraud in 1964. The conviction was later overturned, so Estes was ejudiceronly briefly in jail.

they would be unable to say what justice is. The gentlemen depend as much on what they have heard from their elders as Meno does. Nay, Meno is superior to Anytus and most Athenians since he is at least uncertain as to whether virtue can be taught, whereas the gentlemen (at least if Anytus can be taken as a representative) are absolutely certain. [They] see no difficulty there. So Socrates provokes Anytus, obviously; I mean, there was no need for him to say "these low men," namely, Themistocles and Pericles. This provocation—we know this, because we have hindsight—will lead to Socrates's ruin. Is Socrates not a sensible man, that he brings about his own ruin? Does he wish to die? Or is he so harsh on the gentlemen because their claim is more plausible than the claim of the sophists? And is it good for Meno not to be deceived by the claim of the gentlemen? But why should this be the case? Is it not better to possess the mediocre virtue, say, of Aristides's son than to become an arch-villain? Would we not have confirmed Meno in all respectable prejudice rather than to permit him to run headlong into arch-villainy? That is the question, and we must repeat it[77] [and we will] take it up later on.

Yet the obvious emphasis in the Anytus scene is[78] [not] on the lack [of] virtue of the gentlemen, but on their inability to teach virtue to their nearest and dearest. This inability is proven by the mediocrity of the sons of Themistocles and the others. What is the value of this argument? I think it is the strongest argument against Socrates himself, because what is true of Themistocles is true also of Socrates. His sons too were of notorious mediocrity. [79]Did he[xvi] take proper care of his children? In 1716 or thereabouts, a man wrote in Germany a Latin dissertation: Socrates[80] was neither a dutiful husband nor a praiseworthy father.[xvii] And you can prove that, in a way. There is this nice story especially regarding not his sons but his wife. He had the famous Xanthippe as his wife. And then he was asked by a friend at a dinner, or a banquet rather: Why did you marry that woman who was of all women past, present, and future the most difficult? And then Socrates said, choosing a homely example: If I wanted to become a[81] first-rate horseman, would I take the easiest horse or the most difficult horse? If I could control the most difficult horse I could control any other horse; and since I have to live with human beings, I took the most difficult one for my wife [laughter], so that if I can control her and get along with her then I can get along with anyone. Now did Socrates succeed? And Socrates surely had virtue, but Xanthippe lacked the nature required for becoming an obedient and simple wife. And therefore [82]the argument which [Socrates] uses against Pericles and so forth is of course to be used also against Socrates himself, and the author of this book surely knew that.

And we draw this conclusion: this whole argument is based on an abstraction, abstraction meaning, in the simple sense of the word, the disregard of something, namely, of nature as an important condition of virtue. I believe one can say—at least on the basis of my experience I would not hesitate to say, although I go beyond my experience—that every Platonic dialogue is based on a specific abstraction from something, and one is on his way toward understanding a dialogue if one sees what is the thing deliberately disregarded in the dialogue. And the comic character which all Platonic dialogues have to

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[xvi] That is, Socrates.

[xvii] Friedrich Mentz and Friedrich Wilhelm Sommer, *Socrates nec Officiosus Maritus nec Laudandus Paterfamilias* (Leipzig: Tietze, 1716).

a more or less visible degree is due to this peculiar distortion which is a consequence of that disregard; and if one wants to see what this abstraction or disregard means[83] in its purest form, one has to study Aristophanes's comedies, where always something very important is disregarded and therefore brings about the comic effects. One could easily give some examples, but I think that would lead too far.

Let me only make this point. Here abstraction is made from nature. Previously we have seen [that] abstraction was made from practice, *askēsis*, as a condition of becoming virtuous. So the question is narrowed down to teaching. Virtue can come into being only through teaching, because the other things are irrelevant. And this possibility is so to speak overburdened. Everything depends on whether virtue is teachable; and this is in a way prepared by Meno's initial question when he asks: Is virtue either teachable or acquired by practice, or by nature or in any other way? And Meno's motive for Meno's exclusivist question was that he was from the very beginning concerned with this question: Is virtue teachable? Is not perhaps Protagoras right over against Gorgias, as I have explained before? The result is [that] virtue is not teachable. Again, what shall poor Meno do? He lacks virtue, and there are no teachers of virtue. That is, I think, the question which must keep us in a certain state of tension, excitement, and we will take this up next time.

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[1] Deleted "…this is very."
[2] Deleted "—*politeia*—."
[3] Moved "*Politeia*." Deleted "which.'
[4] Deleted "so."
[5] Changed from "The democratic personality has these and these virtues, and the authoritarian personality has these and these other virtues, although since value-free social scientists who use this distinction wouldn't allow that there is any virtue in the authoritarians, but precisely from a value-free point of view one should say they have also virtues only different ones, perhaps the opposite ones."
[6] Changed from "These are examples, and the most common to us, the most…best known to us, of regimes."
[7] Deleted "to grasp that essence."
[8] Deleted "as all."
[9] Deleted "Now and."
[10] Deleted "You see, of course, that although…that."
[11] Deleted "you had to stay."
[12] Deleted "Socrates…."
[13] Deleted "Or is the…."
[14] Deleted "yes, now, yeah,"
[15] Deleted "this now…."
[16] Deleted "…They repair something that is bad."
[17] Deleted "that."
[18] Moved "Why that is so."
[19] Deleted "And…same with every other trade…."
[20] Deleted "this action."
[21] Deleted "of course."
[22] Deleted "they"
[23] Deleted "But…."
[24] Deleted "So…."
[25] Deleted "So…."
[26] Deleted "If you want to…."
[27] Changed from "And—and then there is something new—that they…that is translated a little bit freely, they honor their parents."

[28] Deleted “they”
[29] Deleted “But.”
[30] Deleted “…he sees.”
[31] Deleted “helping.”
[32] Deleted “is….”
[33] Deleted “no, no.”
[34] Deleted “but in all these…I mean, there were no, how shall I say?”
[35] Deleted “there may be….”
[36] Moved “why not.” Deleted “say….”
[37] Deleted “No, but how do you know?”
[38] Deleted “is the fact that Anytus used.”
[39] Changed from “Yeah, no that is a kind of averting evil—Heracles.”
[40] Deleted “what.”
[41] Deleted “there is…we have to….”
[42] Deleted “Because they do something and….”
[43] Deleted “but there are…so.”
[44] Deleted “old clothes….”
[45] Deleted “they get….”
[46] Deleted “and they….”
[47] Deleted “what I said…says.”
[48] Deleted “in so far as he….”
[49] Deleted “This….”
[50] Deleted “he knew all these facts, there.”
[51] Deleted “or foresight—.“
[52] Deleted “here.”
[53] Deleted “… this expression.”
[54] Deleted “is….”
[55] Deleted “we begin….”
[56] Deleted “Then.”
[57] Deleted “virtue is teachable.”
[58] Deleted “and they will….”
[59] Deleted “because the question has been….”
[60] Deleted “no…Surely there is….”
[61] Deleted “Meno….”
[62] Deleted “Yeah.”
[63] Deleted “To wish…that.”
[64] Deleted “a.”
[65] Changed from “Now the same is true of Aristides, the Just, another paragon of the old-fashioned Athenians rather than Themistocles, in a way the founder of the democracy, in a way.”
[66] Deleted “They—.”
[67] Deleted “knew….”
[68] Deleted “I do not know what it was.”
[69] Deleted “second….”
[70] Deleted “belongs”
[71] Deleted “Socrates might….”
[72] Changed from “Yeah,but did Anytus, you see…That is a difficult question. For example, when you see some of these trials, you know, you know where all kinds of people—some have famous names—for example, let us take Bill Estes because that is an issue which has been decided.”
[73] Deleted “Anytus….”
[74] Deleted “better.”
[75] Deleted “Because.”
[76] Deleted “Meno.”
[77] Deleted “later on….”
[78] Deleted “on the lacking virtue of the gentlemen…not.”
[79] Deleted “Socrates…Well did he take proper care of his children?”
[80] Deleted “is….”

[81] Deleted “very….a.”
[82] Deleted “so Socrates”
[83] Deleted “if one wants to see that.”

Session 11: May 3, 1966

Leo Strauss: I have here a question from Mr. Lyons, which I believe is not only his question: "Why does Meno deserve to be called an arch-villain? Meno is concerned about acquiring virtue and he forgets about having pleasures. He seems to be free of the lusts of the tyrant in Xenophon's *Hiero*." Well, a comparison of Hiero with Meno would probably be too long, one reason being because I do not remember—I would have to be reminded of certain things[1]. But the first question I believe is a necessary one, and [one] which I can try to answer. Meno is presented as an arch-villain by Xenophon in the *Anabasis*; and this is the starting point of Klein's interpretation: he says this shows that Meno had the reputation of an arch-villain, and that every contemporary who took up a book with the title *Meno* knew that, and we must know that. And whether he is in fact an arch-villain or not depends of course in Plato's view[2] on what we see of Meno while we[3] [read through] the dialogue. And we are, I think, not entitled on the basis of the dialogue itself to call him an arch-villain. If that's what you mean, I gladly agree with you.

Now there is one point, however. The proof which Klein gives is supplied by a very complex argument in this first digression on "Memory and Recollection," which we have not considered. In other words, he takes in a broad Platonic analysis of a certain type of human being, and then on the basis of that it would appear to be reasonable. But this analysis is given on the basis of dialogues other than the *Meno*, where no Meno[4] [appears], and it is questionable whether one can use it that way. I grant you that; and I would say, taking only the personnel of the *Meno*, [that] Meno is obviously better than Anytus. So either you have to say there are arch-villains of various orders, or if there can be only one kind of arch-villain, then Meno is less than an arch-villain. I agree with that. More generally stated, here Meno has a reputation that makes sense. But just as in the case of Cephalus (I believe I used that example before) at the beginning of the *Republic*, who seems to be the most wonderful grandfather anyone could wish, a nice old gentleman, and yet if you look more closely, he is not as good as he seems to be. Why could the opposite not be true, that a man is not as bad as he seems to be? And in addition, the full flower of Meno's arch-villainy is attested only for the time after he left Socrates [and] went to Persia; and whether this was in any way a consequence of [the] influence which Socrates exercised on him, that is also a question which we have not been able to discuss because we have not yet reached the end of the dialogue.

Yes. Now Meno surely—I think Klein is very severe on him. When Meno, for example, doesn't understand a point of importance at the first presentation, that happens to other people, too—I mean in so-called real life as well as in Platonic dialogues. One would have to show whether the nicest Platonic characters—say, Glaucon, Adeimantus, and such people—whether they are not also sometimes impervious to Socratic considerations. And even if they agree with Socrates all the time, that of course doesn't mean that they have understood him, not by a long shot. So one would have to see from their own articulate reactions to Socrates that they did understand him. But yes, I think—I agree with you on Klein. I only accepted it as a good beginning of the whole argument, namely,

because it brings out this Platonic irony: *the* dialogue on virtue has the title of a man notorious for his villainy, and he is the chief character there. This is surely sound, I would say, up to this point. But I thought you brought it up in connection with the question of criminal law. What should we do to Meno? Well, we haven't seen that he was[5] guilty of any crime. Socrates accused him once of a crime: "You scoundrel." But then Meno was quite innocent, as we have seen, in this particular case. So you don't wish to bring up this question of criminal law, in other words, of the principles of criminal law?

Mr. Lyons: I was going to raise a second question about criminal law after the beginning of the dialogue. I'm going to raise it—

LS: You know, I think it is better we postpone it[6] until the whole evidence is in, and then we will consider ourselves as a jury. Good. Well there was some—Mr. Burnam, you seem to—

Mr. Burnam: Maybe this would be better postponed, too, but I wonder what significance you would attach then to Meno's habit of repeating various inconsistent things that he's heard from different sources. That seems to indicate that he doesn't really consider his opinions at all.

LS: Yes, that is true. But I must also say that happens in the best families [laughter], and not only among the black sheep in the best families, but it [is] quite common. And it would all amount to this: that Meno is not able to become a philosopher. That is quite true. But it is of course very harsh to say that a man who is unable to become a philosopher is for this very reason an arch-villain. What would happen to all of us? And so it would be a literal inference from the premise that virtue is knowledge in the sense that virtue consists in the quest for wisdom, i.e., philosophy. If that is so, everyone who is not a philosopher is indeed a man of defective virtue, not to say of vice. And then it would be true. But that is such an extreme statement that we are not entitled to make use of it in everyday life. We have to use it rather as a mirror to look at for our judgment of ourselves [rather] than for our judgment on other people.

So let us leave it at that: the fact that Meno had this reputation, this very bad reputation, is important as an indication of the way in which virtue will be treated here.[7] Socrates doesn't speak about virtue with a man of notorious virtue.[8] In other words, the man to whom he talks about virtue is a man who does not know virtue from his own experience of himself,[9] who is incompetent regarding virtue. And the practical consequence will be that what virtue is will not become entirely clear in this dialogue, for this very reason.[10] Plato never makes the point entirely clear; there is always an aura of ignorance, uncertainty, or darkness which remains. There is not a single Platonic dialogue of which one could say that it settles the question with which it's concerned in the opinion of Plato, finally and exhaustively. There are no Platonic treatises, altogether. Good.

Student: Well, why not perhaps a dialogue between two philosophers? If virtue is always . . . the final teaching . . .

LS: Yes. Well, we have a dialogue in the Platonic corpus, the *Parmenides*. [The chief interlocutors are] Parmenides and Socrates. But here Socrates is still very young. Plato made it a rule, obviously, never to have a dialogue between two men of the highest order. Why he made that rule, why he never presented to us the perfect dialogue, if we could say that that is a question—that is an important question. But the fact is undeniable: there is always inequality between the chief character and the other characters. The chief character is in most cases, as you know, Socrates, but not in all cases. In the dialogues *Sophist* and *Statesman* there is a man, a stranger from Elea, also a philosopher [and] the chief character. Socrates is present but there is no exchange to speak of between Socrates and the Eleatic stranger. And at the end of these two dialogues, [in] the *Statesman*, the Eleatic stranger speaks to a man called Socrates, the younger Socrates. The young man has nothing to do with Socrates; [it is] only the name he has in common. The last sentence is that the young Socrates says: Yes, you have solved the problem completely—roughly to this effect. And a wise or unwise recent commentator says: But this must have been said by the old Socrates because the only way to complete such an exchange [would be] that the most respectable man present, i.e., the old Socrates, would make the final remark, like in the *Symposium* or so. But this is of course nonsense. I think it is perfectly proper that whatever the old Socrates might have said afterward, that would not form a part of the dialogue. That would be a fact of life which must be regarded in an artistic imitation of life, because it is[11] strictly accidental and doesn't belong to the thing. Good.

So now let us continue at 95a2 to 4. But let me remind you: we have completed last time our reading of the scene with Anytus. Anytus, to repeat, [is] the chief accuser of Socrates. Anytus was drawn in by Socrates when the question came up whether there are teachers of virtue. Anytus denied passionately that the sophists are teachers of virtue; they are corrupters rather than teachers of virtue. But he asserted with equal heat that the respectable Athenians are in fact teachers of virtue, although he did not use that expression. Now Socrates proved, then, in a manner that those gentlemen are no whit better as teachers of virtue than the sophists. Anytus reacts to that by becoming angry at Socrates and threatening him. The exchange between Socrates and Anytus comes to a stop. That was the point we reached. But—and that is very important—Anytus does not leave. He stays there until the end of the dialogue. He remains as a witness of the last part of Socrates's conversation with Meno. Perhaps what he will observe will be used by him in his accusation of Socrates a few years later, but this is of course only a possibility. Now will you read, Mr. Reinken, the beginning of Socrates's answer?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Meno, I think Anytus is angry, and I am not at all surprised: for he conceives, in the first place, that I am speaking ill of these gentlemen; and in the second place, he considers he is one of them himself.

LS: Yes. So Anytus in other words commits a twofold error. First, he believes—or take the second point first: he believes that he is a great man, belonging to [the rank of] Themistocles and Pericles and the others.[12] Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Yet, should the day come when he knows what "speaking ill" means, his anger will cease; at present he does not know.

LS: Yes, now that is the second error—or the first according to the other enumeration. He does not know what slander is, i.e., he mistakes the saying of unpleasing truth for slander,[13] [just as] the term slander is in the present time used very frequently by the Soviet government, as you surely know. Every unfavorable remark about any action or practice of the Soviet government is called slander. I know this from the daily papers; I do not read Russian, so those of you who know Russian may correct me. But I was struck by that. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Now you must answer me: are there not—

LS: "You," namely, Meno. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

> are there not good and honourable men among your people also?

LS: This "good and honourable men" is a term which we ordinarily translate by "gentlemen," so it might be as well to do it here.

Mr. Reinken:

> Do you have gentlemen too?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Well then, are they willing to put themselves forward as teachers of the young, and avow that they are teachers and that virtue is to be taught?
> [MEN.] No, no, Socrates—

LS: "No, by Zeus."

Mr. Reinken:

> by Zeus: sometimes you may hear them refer to it as teachable, but sometimes as not. (95a2-b5)

LS: Now let us stop here.[14] Socrates continues the same question: What about the Thessalian gentlemen? After all, the Athenian gentlemen might lack virtue but maybe you find it in this hard,[15] wild country in the north. Meno says there are such beings in Thessaly, but they do not claim to be teachers of virtue. Now of course the Athenian gentlemen also did not claim to be teachers of virtue, as we have seen. But they do not simply deny [in Thessaly] that virtue is teachable, just as the Athenian gentlemen did not deny it. They are uncertain on this point, and this is perhaps the difference between the Thessalian gentlemen and the Athenian gentlemen as to whether virtue is teachable. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then are we to call those persons teachers of this thing, when they do not even agree on that great question?
> [MEN.] I should say not, Socrates.

LS: Yes. So since they are uncertain regarding the teachability of virtue, they themselves are very unlikely to be teachers of virtue. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, and what of the sophists? Do you consider these, its only professors, to be teachers of virtue?

LS: Ya, "who are the only ones to claim that they can teach virtue." That's the meaning of that.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] That is a point, Socrates, for which I admire Gorgias: you will never hear him promising this—

LS: Ya, "for which I admire Gorgias particularly."

Mr. Reinken:

> you will never hear him promising this, and he ridicules the others when he hears them promise it. Skill in speaking is what he takes it to be their business to produce. (95b6-c4)

LS: Yes. Now the only men who claim to be teachers of virtue are the sophists, i.e., not the [gentlemen]. They do that. But Gorgias finds their claim ridiculous. Now this raises two hands at least.

Student: I just am wondering how or why Socrates says Anytus is in the room and well, mostly, how do you know that he is in the room?

LS: Oh, he speaks to or refers to him at least two times: "Anytus here."

Same Student: Oh, maybe it is just a poor translation.

LS: No, no, no. For example, right at the end in 100b8, it is said: "*ton xenon tonde Anyton*," "this guest friend Anytus here."[i] No, no, he is present all right. Yes, that was the only point you wanted to make?

Same Student: Yeah, because this was really . . . He has said don't bother with him because he doesn't know anything.

LS: Pardon?

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[i] In original: "our friend Anytus," which fails to convey this meaning and might have misled the student.

Same Student: He has just said let's forget about Anytus because he doesn't know what he's talking about. That is, you know—

LS: No,[16] he doesn't know what slander means. It's a very limited ignorance.

Same Student: Isn't that rather strong?

LS: Yes. We have seen that he used quite strong language.[17] Let us take the case of a psychiatrist Freudian style, and you would speak in a very derogatory manner about Freud. Would this not be a grosser insult to him than a derogatory speech about him? Because he admits his inferiority to Freud as a matter of course, and if his idol is not good, then he is still less good.[18] That is, Socrates was very provocative to Anytus before—unusually provocative, I would say, more than in the *Gorgias*. There is a parallel to that in the *Gorgias*, where he also criticizes the Athenian statesmen very severely,[ii] but not as severely as here in the *Meno*.

Mr. Reinken: What may keep Anytus from going away is something akin to an apology. When Socrates notes that Anytus is angry and says he's not surprised, he doesn't say he's sorry, but Anytus may stay to hear. At least this fellow knows that he has been infuriating, and Anytus may stay to overhear what Socrates is going to say about his errors.

LS: [19]Well, at any rate, the motivation may be that he is sufficiently interested in the subject to stay on. He also may wish to stay on in order to protect Meno against further corruption.[20] We do not have sufficient evidence to decide that. But it makes sense that after a rather violent exchange with someone, you stay on in order to observe what is going on next because it [21]could look as [if you were] running away. There are *n* reasons which one could give for the fact that he doesn't leave, but the [point of] crucial importance for the dialogue as a whole, it seems to me, is that Anytus is a witness of what happens in the last part. And why this is important we shall see soon. Yes?

Student: I just wanted to get straight the difference between the Athenian and Thessalian gentlemen. In Thessaly, they are uncertain as to whether virtue can be taught.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Isn't that the same in Athens?

LS: No. Well, in Athens the Athenian fathers did not explicitly claim to be teachers of virtue, but Anytus claimed on their behalf that of course they are the ones who teach virtue. They don't claim it, but they are in fact the only teachers of virtue.

Same Student: But that's only Anytus's claim; I mean, could it not be that in reality the Athenian gentlemen in general—

[ii] Presumably Strauss means the famous passage in the *Gorgias* beginning at 515c.

LS: [It] could, ya, but this has not yet come out. Good. Yes, now let us read the next speech, the speech of Socrates. To repeat, Gorgias claims to be only a teacher of rhetoric, not to be a teacher of virtue. And the sophists however are those who claim that they are teachers of virtue. That is a narrower definition of sophist than one finds elsewhere, where a sophist simply means a man who[22] demands pay for teaching gentlemen the accomplishments, like public speaking, without claiming to make them virtuous or good. So Gorgias is more modest, more reasonable than, say, Protagoras. Yes?

Student: This seems to be different from the statement at the very beginning when you said it was ironical that Socrates characterized the Athenians as not being able to decide what virtue was, but that people from Thessaly being able in the style of Gorgias to answer any questions.

LS: Yes, that was indeed very clearly ironical, because Gorgias was a man who[23] [sat down] and said: Shoot questions at me; any questions, I answer them. You know? That is part of rhetoric. If you a rhetorician you must be able to answer all questions, to counter all objections, for example. Ya?

Same Student: Except [about] virtue; virtue must be somewhat different from all the other questions.

LS: Why? Meno has three answers to the question of what virtue is. Whether they are good is another matter. I mean, any other man who raises the claim to omnicompetence or omniscience is a fool, obviously. But this doesn't prevent him from raising that claim; otherwise there wouldn't be so many fakes in the world.

Same Student: What Meno says here is that people aren't really sure whether it's teachable.

LS: Ya, but the question of whether virtue is teachable is not identical with the question of what is virtue, is it?

Same Student: Well, so as far as this question goes, this is[24] one type of question maybe that Gorgias isn't willing to go out on a limb on, as he is on all the other questions.

LS: No, he is very clear. He says it isn't teachable. He has a final answer to that question. He says virtue is that and that—whatever it may be—but it is not teachable; and Protagoras says virtue is that and that, but it is teachable. That is the only issue here. It will be linked up again with the broader question very soon.[25] Now what does Socrates say then in reply to Meno's remark about Gorgias's prudence or modesty?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Then you do not think the sophists are teachers of virtue?

LS: That's interesting. That's a question: Meno is a follower of Gorgias, as we know, and Socrates implies [that] he will of course agree with Gorgias's view on the sophists, or on the teachability of virtue. But [instead, there is] a question mark because he doesn't know. And now there comes in a way the most surprising moment in the dialogue.

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] I cannot say, Socrates. I am in the same plight as the rest of the world: sometimes I think that they are, sometimes that they are not. (95c5-8)

LS: Ya, now this is the great surprise. The follower of Gorgias, Meno, is not certain whether Gorgias is right in the point most important to Meno. So he is not simply a follower. In the decisive respect, Meno is not a follower of Gorgias, and here we have the explanation [for] why Meno approaches Socrates in such an abrupt and conspicuous manner with his question at the beginning. Socrates should act, as it were, as an arbiter between Gorgias and the sophists—sophists in the narrower sense. That I think is the simple explanation of the beginning. Now let us consider this for one moment. Socrates agrees, as it appears, with Gorgias rather than with Protagoras. So after having led Meno away from Gorgias in the direction of Protagoras—you know, there was a time when it seemed as if virtue, being knowledge, would be teachable—he leads him now back to Gorgias. [But he does so] on a perhaps slightly different level. That we must see.

Now I would like to say now a few words on the two dialogues, *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, to which I have referred more than once. Do these two dialogues bear out the suggestion that Socrates is closer to Gorgias than to Protagoras? I believe they do. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates refutes Gorgias's view of rhetoric and exhibits his own rhetoric in its greatness and its misery. Those of you who have read the *Gorgias* will know that there are three parts of the dialogue. There is first a very brief discussion between Socrates and Gorgias,[26] who is already tired out from speaking too much. He had made an exhibition speech shortly before Socrates came. Socrates was spared that by coming so late. And then after Gorgias is out,[27] Socrates has first a discussion with Polus, also a professional rhetorician, and then [in] the[28] largest part of the dialogue, [a discussion] with Callicles, an Athenian gentleman who[29] is interested in speaking well and of course not [interested] to become a teacher of rhetoric.

Now Socrates is quite successful in his argument with Polus, and he is unsuccessful in his conversation with Callicles. That is to say that in the Callicles section, Socrates succeeds in silencing Callicles. He does not succeed in convincing him[30] or in persuading him: a rhetorician is good only if he persuades and not merely reduces the people he addresses[31] to a more or less sullen silence. Socrates, we can say, shows in the *Gorgias* true rhetoric (of which Gorgias is more or less unaware) as ministerial to the truly political art, which is the same as philosophy, and he indicates what Gorgias could do as a minister—as a handmaid, as it were, to philosophy, [which is] something which Socrates himself could not do.[32] So in other words, rhetoric rightly understood is a necessary and respectable thing. That comes out only when you read on; in the beginning, especially in the Polus section, rhetoric is plainly rejected, but this is corrected later on in the dialogue.

In the *Protagoras*, however, Socrates refutes Protagoras's view according to which virtue is teachable, by refuting Protagoras's view as to what is virtue. You see that's very close to the theme of the *Meno*. And the answer suggested is, just as in the *Meno*, [that] virtue is knowledge. But knowledge is understood here as the art of measuring pleasures and pains.[33] Let us say we are tempted by some apple to steal it, and we see the present pleasure of the juicy apple. We do not see equally present the pain of being jailed, or spending a few days in jail or in a house of correction, whatever the proper place would be; and [34]so we must have an art which makes the future pain commensurate with the present pleasure. And that is an art of measurement—as Bentham called it later on, a felicific calculus.[35][iii] If we have that, we will be virtuous. Virtue will be knowledge, namely, the knowledge of measuring pleasures and pains. Now this argument against Protagoras is [36]meant to show him what—also as in the *Gorgias*, to show Protagoras what he should do. If he wants to teach virtue he should become a teacher of the felicific calculus. The argument is based on the explicit identification of the good and the pleasant. The *Gorgias*, however, is based on the explicit denial of the identity of the good and the pleasant. I conclude from this that Socrates is closer to Gorgias insofar as rhetoric is a necessary ingredient of the cosmos of the arts, whereas sophistry is not. Sophistry is a sham art, whereas rhetoric rightly understood is not. It is by no means the highest [art], but [it is] an art.[37] But the most important point, to repeat, is that we see here that Meno, this follower of Gorgias, does not follow Gorgias in the most important point. And in this way we understand why he approaches Socrates, and we do not have to guess any more about that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: One last point on those two. Isn't one of them compulsory, and another not compulsory?

LS: Excellent point. Which of course would not settle [the question of] the superiority [of one over the other], but it would confirm it. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates is shown to us [as] eager to come to Gorgias. Eager. It was very clear at the beginning. And he comes a bit late so he couldn't have heard this beautiful exhibitionist speech of Gorgias, and that was the fault of Chaerephon, as is explained in the beginning—Chaerephon being [portrayed as a] constant companion of Socrates already in Aristophanes's *Clouds*. And in the *Protagoras*, Socrates goes there only because he wishes to prevent a young Athenian from becoming a pupil of Protagoras—in other words, to protect him, from a sense of duty. It is not a voluntary dialogue. I thank you for reminding me of that, Mr. Reinkin. Yes. Now this is of course an entirely compulsory dialogue, because Meno comes to him, you know, forces Socrates to answer him. Good. [95]c9 now.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And you are aware that not only you and other political folk are in two minds as to whether virtue is to be taught, but Theognis the poet also says, you remember, the very same thing?

[iii] Bentham did not use the phrase "felicific calculus," but he set out in his *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780/89) and in other works criteria for the measurement of pleasures and pains: intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, propinquity or remoteness.

LS: Ya, you see the clear distinction here between the political men, which means of course also the statesmen most of all, and the poets, the different group. There may be personal union, i.e., it may happen that a given politician is also a poet and the other way around, but the activities themselves are clearly distinguished. We shall not learn from this dialogue, except perhaps a bit later, what poetry is. Yes. Of course he mentions only a single poet, whereas he mentions the political man [as a group]. The reason is that this single poet's utterance is particularly pertinent, and therefore he doesn't have to speak of poets in general. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [MEN.] In which part of his poems?

LS: You see that Meno, who is said to be such a good rememberer, does not remember or know the verses in question. His memory is surely selective. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] In those elegiac lines where he says—"Eat and drink with these men: sit with them, and be pleasing unto them, who wield great power; for from the good wilt thou win thee lessons in the good. But mingle—

LS: Well, "you will learn." Let us translate it a bit more literally.

Mr. Reinken:

> from the good you will learn; But mingle with the bad, and thou wilt lose even the sense that thou hast."

LS: Let us stop here. So here he teaches the teachability of virtue. You must mingle with the mighty. But here the mighty are of course identified with the good, with the men of high standards, so by mingling with the high men, you learn virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Do you observe how in these words he implies that virtue is to be taught?

LS: "Teachable." Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

> teachable? He does, evidently, but in some other lines he shifts his ground a little, saying—
> "Could understanding be created and put into a man," (I think it runs thus), "many high rewards would they obtain" (that is, the men who were able to do such a thing): and again—
> "Never would a bad son have sprung from a good father, for he would have followed the precepts of wisdom: but not by teaching wilt thou ever make the bad man good."

LS: So yes, read the next line.

Mr. Reinken:

> You notice how in the second passage he contradicts himself on the same point? [MEN.] Apparently. (95c9-96a5)

LS: [38]The author is Theognis, a poet from Megara, belonging to the aristocratic party there, and his aristocratic preferences appear to some extent from these verses. But does he contradict himself?

Mr. Reinken: Because the teaching referred to in the second seems to be precept, whereas[39] [the first states] you won't become virtuous by hearing just the speeches of the great; you've got to go to their house parties.

LS: No, that is not sufficient.

Student: Perhaps it's in the sentence "but not by teaching wilt thou ever make the bad man good." It's not the same to say that you can't make a bad man good and that you can't teach virtue.

LS: But how is the beginning of the second statement? Let us reconsider that. "If sense—" How did he translate that?

Mr. Reinken: Well, "If understanding could be created and put into man."

LS: Ya, ya, that's the point. So in other words, what is presupposed in the first part is of course that the man who mingles with the gentlemen has some sense primarily, but the sense cannot be put into him by any teaching. What did you want to say?

Student: Yeah, it seemed to me that in the first passage the way in which the goodness is learned is not so much by precept but by living with good people. Of course the only actions you see are good, and it is instilled in you almost by habit and imitation how to be good, where[as] in the second one, what is opposed to it is somebody sitting down and giving you lessons in how to be good.

LS: That is also true.[40] But I think equally important is the point that in the first case it is presupposed that the young man who converses with the good men has native sense; and the thought that you can produce the sense by teaching, that is absurd. More generally stated, Theognis recognizes the importance of the natural equipment, of the nature which is presupposed, something which we have seen has been deliberately pushed back throughout the dialogue. Yes?

Student: I thought that you are saying that there really is no contradiction. Would that indicate that Meno doesn't realize that there are people who could not become philosophers, [himself included]?[41]

LS: Yes.[42] There is some evidence for that. I mean, if Meno had believed formerly in it, he would have been convinced by what happened in this dialogue that there is no important natural difference among men. How?

Student: Even the slave.

LS: Exactly. Now he is of course infinitely superior to this poor slave boy, and if this slave boy can learn, everyone can learn. A good rhetorical argument. Ya—not demonstrative . . . Yes?

Student: Is it important that in the passage where Meno explicitly disagrees with Gorgias he follows the many?[iv]

LS: That is[43] a good question. In other words, that is the situation of most men, in which Meno finds himself. And so to speak among the elite, where we find men like Gorgias and Protagoras, there are people who take[44] one of the two views, that is true. But Theognis also of course belongs to the large majority. Yes, Mr. Shulsky.

Mr. Shulsky: In a sense Meno[45] agrees with the many in that statement, in the sense in which Socrates in the beginning says: I'm just like the many; I don't know. In both cases they have an awareness of not knowing which—

LS: But you must not forget, in the beginning this statement when he speaks about "we Athenians" it is of course manifestly ironical, because only Socrates or a few people with him have a doubt as to what virtue is. Most of them—Anytus and Pericles—are quite sure they know what virtue is. Good. Shall we go on here?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, can you name any other subject in which the professing teachers are not only refused recognition as teachers of others, but regarded as not even understanding it themselves, and indeed as inferior in the very quality of which they claim to be teachers; while those who are themselves recognized as men of worth and honour say at one time that it is teachable, and at another that it is not? When people are so confused about this or that matter, can you say they are teachers in any proper sense of the word?
> [MEN.] No indeed—By Zeus,[v] I cannot.

LS: Now the sophists who claim to be teachers of virtue are even thought to lack virtue itself; they have a bad reputation. The gentlemen are thought to possess virtue. That is, they have this reputation, but they are uncertain as to whether virtue can be taught. Surely the latter, the more respectable, cannot be teachers of virtue because they are not sure whether they can teach it. And a teacher—as you will find out when you apply for a teaching position, you will be asked whether you think you can become a good teacher or

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[iv] The questioner must know some Greek. The Loeb translates *hoi polloi* in 95c8 as "the rest of the world," and Strauss did not correct it.

[v] Mr Reinken has looked at the Greek and added "By Zeus." The Loeb translates "No, indeed."

are a teacher, and if you say you don't know, that is the best way for not getting a teaching job. I give you this piece of advice. [Laughter] Good. Now what follows from all that?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] Well, if neither the sophists nor the men who are themselves gentlemen[vi] are teachers of the subject, clearly no others can be?
> [MEN.] I agree.

LS: Now who else could it be, because look around—I mean, the gentlemen are regarded[46] [as] possess[ing] virtue and therefore might be able to transmit it. The only ones who claim to be teachers of virtue are the sophists. So a reasonable induction leads to this conclusion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] And if there are no teachers, there can be no disciples either? (96c1)
> [MEN.] I think that statement is true.
> [SOC.] And we have admitted that a thing of which there are neither teachers nor disciples cannot be taught—is unteachable?[vii]
> [MEN.] We have.
> [SOC.] So nowhere are any teachers of virtue to be found?
> [MEN.] That is so.
> [SOC.] And if no teachers, then no disciples? (96c8)
> [MEN.] So it appears.
> [SOC.] Hence virtue cannot be taught?
> [MEN.]: It seems—

LS: Let us stop here. There are no teachers of virtue because virtue is not teachable, and that has of course a further consequence which we will see soon. If virtue is not teachable, it cannot be knowledge; and the whole beautiful structure erected by Socrates, which seemed to prove that virtue is knowledge, collapses. Here is a point of some interest in c1: if no teachers, then no students, no pupils. That is literally repeated in c8. That happens very rarely in a Platonic dialogue. I thought I should draw your attention to that. Yes. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken: Ah, Meno.

> [MEN.] It seems likely, if our investigation is correct. And that makes me wonder, I must say, Socrates, whether perhaps there are no good men at all, or by what possible sort of process good people can come to exist? (96a6-d4)

LS: So Meno is not quite convinced. He says "if our investigation has been correct." But he wonders nevertheless: Are there any men who are virtuous? Yes?

[vi] In original: "good and honourable." Mr. Reinken did not alter this expression when translated in the same manner in the preceding quotation (96b3).
[vii] These last two words do not appear in the Loeb.

Mr. Shulsky: From what we've said about Meno's reason for asking the question, you would think that he would accept this conclusion very happily because it means that there is no threat to his own conception of his being virtuous, because—

LS: Ya, but[47] we underestimated Meno. And perhaps I, at least, have been misled a bit by Klein's suggestions, and that happens.[48] I think you all know this from your own experience: when you read a good book, then you have also the task, the very salutary [but] painful task to liberate yourself again from the impression which it made,[49] because it may not be good in every way.

To repeat, Meno wonders: Are there any men who are virtuous? —which of course includes him. But the general question surely goes much beyond Gorgias. Gorgias took it for granted [that] there are virtuous men; he had no very high notion of what a virtuous man is but he [accepted that there were some].[50] Or if there are virtuous men, how did they become virtuous? They could not have become virtuous by being taught. He is not aware that the question "What is virtue?" must now be faced again, because the whole structure collapses. For if virtue is not teachable, it cannot be knowledge, and in particular it cannot be prudence. What then is virtue? You see how important this neglected question is. Socrates makes Meno doubt of Meno's virtue—of course of Socrates's virtue, too, that goes without [saying]—but Socrates is not a boaster anyway. If we think of that, that Socrates succeeded in making Meno doubt of his virtue, what could Socrates not have achieved if Meno had only stayed with him in Athens? I refer you to 76e7 to 9, where this is stated in a somewhat more limited context, that he has to go away, probably to Persia; but if he would stay here, Socrates would tell him some more things, he says. Meno is no longer angry at Socrates, or not hostile in any way. He resisted Socrates for the last time in 86d3 following. That's the last time where he resisted Socrates, and this resistance was very mild, however, since it was an outcome of the slave scene which suggested—no, the passage which I meant I can tell you immediately. It is after—

Mr. Reinken: 86c to d, the order of questions he—

LS: [51]I meant 86c7, when Socrates asks him after the slave scene: What is virtue, now after showing you that learning is possible? And then he says: Yes, I will answer it, but I would rather have you first reconsider whether virtue is teachable, and not what is virtue. You remember that. That was the last resistance. And this resistance was[52] very mild, since it was an outcome of the slave scene, which suggested to Meno that one does not have to raise the question: What is? So Meno's resistance to Socrates has really ceased after Socrates told the story of recollection, and that is very important.[53] This is a very great success in a conversation with a man of dubious docility, which he surely is, [for Socrates] to bring [it] about that he goes along with Socrates, although Socrates adapts the argument to Meno's capacities. That is another reason why the arch-villain point must be qualified. Yes, now there are many questions.

Student: I was wondering: this is probably a matter of tone, since I can't read Greek [in order] to understand it. Couldn't the statement: "Socrates, whether perhaps there are no

good men at all" be a confirmation of Meno's [villainy]?[54] He is happy to find this, because that means that if he is a bad man too, like everybody else, there is nothing particularly bad about that.

LS: Ya. No, but that is the danger to which I myself succumbed for some time, that I became obsessed with the notion that he is an arch-villain. And I must in each case look at it from this point of view. But I think we must now really take it—there is no real evidence, no sufficient evidence for that in the dialogue.[55] Yes, oh I'm sorry, Mr. . . .

Student: Back at the passage where he resists Socrates, there was reference made to his being beloved of other men. He was fair. And this had something to do with his being rather uncontrollable. Or he had this attitude toward Socrates, too; he would control him the same way.

LS: Ya.

Student: And Anytus now seems to be still in that state. That is, he is fair in the eyes of the city of Athens in the sense in which he can't be controlled. Yet Meno has finally come to the point where if he would stay in Athens now, he could become perhaps a good pupil of Socrates.

LS: Well, one reason, I believe, is that he is younger. You know that generally speaking people harden when they become older, and especially if they are great social successes, as Anytus in a way was. You know, he was an outstanding politician, frequently elected to high office. That doesn't make a man more modest.

Student: But he is beloved of Athenians.

LS: Yes. But it is clear that owing to the prejudice of Anytus against the sophists, he did not have this modicum of "quote culture unquote" which Meno had acquired. Now this was surely something rather superficial, as it is in most cases, but it can also be the starting ground, the jumping-off ground for becoming truly cultivated. You know that can happen. Some people simply leave it at the fact that they can claim that they are educated people or cultured people and are interested in it only for the sake of this silly social claim, but in a given case, it may also turn the other way around, [so] that the social claim becomes utterly irrelevant and the culture, the education itself, the cultivation of the mind, becomes important. And this is, I think, the situation of Meno. He could perhaps learn something, although he could not learn on the highest level. That is, I believe, a fairer statement about him than we have hitherto made. Now let us go on where we left off, 96d5 following.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I fear, Meno, you and I are but poor creatures, and Gorgias has been as faulty an educator of you as Prodicus of me.

LS: Ya. Now Socrates says, almost: You and I lack virtue since we lacked competent teachers of virtue—which is of course the height of irony after all that has happened.[56] He means: You and I are ignorant regarding the most important matters, and this is due to the incompetence of our teachers, who are sophists in the wide sense of the term.[57] Socrates seems to have been on closer terms with Prodicus than with any other of the sophists. Prodicus is one of the characters in the *Protagoras*, and there his character is described. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] So our first duty is to look to ourselves, and try to find somebody who will have some means or other of making us better. I say this with special reference to our recent inquiry, in which I see that we absurdly failed to note that it is not only through the guidance of knowledge that human conduct is right and good; and it is probably owing to this that we fail to perceive by what means good men can be produced.
> [MEN.] To what are you alluding, Socrates? (95d5-e6)

LS: Yes, now let us return to the beginning of this Socratic speech. Since we are ignorant regarding the most important matters, and our teachers[58] Gorgias and Prodicus are of no help to us, we must take care of ourselves and seek who[mever] in the world will make us better. Who, that is left open, whether it is a human being or a god. And the defect of our previous discussion, of which Meno was in his way aware, as you see from his remark in d1: It doesn't seem if we have considered the matter correctly; we have absurdly disregarded the fact that men act well without knowledge. Now acting well, habitually acting well, means of course practicing virtue. Virtue may be possible without knowledge. In fact, virtue is not possible with or through knowledge because, [as] we have seen, there are no teachers of virtue. Now this is a shocking, if necessary, consequence from the preceding exchange. To repeat again the simple argument: If virtue is knowledge, it must be teachable, and it cannot be teachable if there are no teachers of virtue. But there are no teachers of virtue; hence virtue cannot be knowledge. Meno is understandably baffled. I think every one of us would be in the same boat.[59] But what does this mean? That is the point, the question: What does this mean, to be virtuous without knowledge? That is extremely strange. Now let us go on when Socrates will answer Meno's reasonable question.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> [SOC.] I mean that good men must be useful: we were right, were we not, in admitting that this must needs be so?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And in thinking that they will be useful if they give us right guidance in conduct: here also, I suppose, our admission was correct?
> [MEN.] Yes.

LS: Now Socrates says, as it were, to Meno: We made a mistake. Let us therefore return to the points at which we made our mistake; we were not yet mistaken by holding that good men are useful men. That is to say that good men are useful if they guide for us our

affairs correctly, which implies that good men are the guides of others. Good men are the good statesmen, with the understanding that Socrates and Meno are not statesmen. Socrates seems to make the same mistake for which he reproached Meno earlier. The virtue of the good statesman is of course only one kind of virtue and we wanted to know the virtue of human beings as such. Unless he is meaning the virtue *par excellence*, so that all other kinds of virtue would be deficient or diluted versions of the virtue *par excellence*. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] But our assertion that it is impossible to give right guidance unless one has knowledge looks very like a mistake.
> [MEN.] What do you mean by that?

LS: So our mistake then was that we assumed that correct guidance requires prudence, *phronēsis*. Meno is rightly still baffled, because the whole argument seemed to prove conclusively that without prudence no right action is possible. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [SOC.] I will tell you. If a man knew the way to Larisa, or any other place you please, and walked there and led others, would he not give right and good guidance?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] Well, and a person who had a right opinion as to which was the way, but had never been there and did not really know, might give right guidance, might he not?
> [MEN.] Certainly. (96e7-97b4)

LS: Ya. Now let us consider. So here Socrates indicates the solution. Right guidance, which we all need, can be supplied by right opinion as well as by knowledge.[60] In this case, right opinion would be [this]: a man who knows how to walk to Larissa without having ever taken the way himself. And this would ordinarily be the case if he had heard it from a native—"that's the way in which you go"—and he trusts[61] the man whom he has heard [say] it. Yes.[62] In other words, [63]you can act rightly if you have right opinion, and the right opinion is ordinarily derived from people who know. So this remains as a necessity even in the background: there cannot be right opinion if there are not people around who know. But Socrates will now lead Meno, generally speaking, in an ambiguous and vague way to the position that there may be right opinion without any people of knowledge around. Yes.

Student: You mentioned the source of right opinion—you got right opinion from someone who knows. Is this necessary?

LS: Not necessary.

Same Student: Supposing in a sense a person is almost guessing; he has really no reason for believing one way or the other but his answer happens to be right. Does he still have right opinion?

LS: If it happens to be right. In other words, if[64] he says: I bet this is the right way; and you follow him and his guess proves to be correct. Sure; that could happen.

Same Student: The source of right opinion has no necessity to go back to—

LS: No, but it will become clearer later on that this is the most interesting case. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I thought there was an overtone of the sophists in this second person who would know the way to Larissa: he just doesn't go there himself, as a sophist[65] would claim to know how to rule a state splendidly; it's just not the sort of thing he does.

LS: Ya, but he does not explicitly speak here of men, does he, who know the right way and do not take it. That, I think, would be supposed, what you say.

Mr. Reinken: I did not—I was wondering—okay, he would be lost in the middle.

LS: Ya. No, when he says in b, "but if he[66] opines correctly, but has never taken it and does not know it, would he not nevertheless opine correctly?"[viii] Those who can know the Greek must observe here[67] for instance in the whole context the double meaning of the Greek word *hēgeisthai*,[68] which means both guiding, to guide, and to believe. And that is deliberately used here for a reason which we will see later. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Oh, so—

> [SOC.] And so long, I presume, as he has right opinion about that which the other man really knows, he will be just as good a guide—if he thinks the truth instead of knowing it—as the man who has the knowledge.
> [MEN.] Just as good. (97b5-8)

LS: So the man of correct opinion is as good a guide as the knower. Well, take another case, say, a mechanic in a laboratory who does not know the reasons why these and these operations are being done, but from a long experience he knows that if you do these and these things mechanically in the way in which he knows they have to be done, nothing untoward happens. But if they are done in the wrong way, which may happen even to a knower, then explosions and all other kinds of misfortunes happen.[69] That would be a case of a man who opines correctly: he does not know the reasons why, also, which is not based on mere memory, which is not based on what others told him. He has a certain experience that this [operation] functions, but he cannot give the reasons why . . . At any rate, the man of correct opinion is as good a guide as the knower, as long as he has the correct opinion. So in the ordinary case, he will have learned the correct opinion from others, and hence he will own it only through his memory. Therefore he can forget it

[viii] Strauss's translation.

easily, and therefore it is necessary to point that [out to him]: as long as he has the correct opinion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Hence true opinion is as good a guide to rightness of action as knowledge; and this is a point we omitted just now in our consideration of the nature of virtue, when we stated that knowledge is the only guide—

LS: Ya, "Knowledge" is here "prudence."

Mr. Reinken:

> prudence is the only guide of right action; whereas we find there is also right[ix] opinion.

LS: Here "true opinion." The words "true opinion" and "correct opinion" are used here interchangeably. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> So it seems. Then right opinion—

LS: "Correct opinion."

Mr. Reinken: Okay.

> right opinion is just as useful as knowledge. (97b9-c5)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. As far as the correct[ness] of actions[70] [is] concerned—action is emphasized now—true opinion is no whit inferior to prudence. Correct opinion is as useful as knowledge. But we must not forget what happened before. Virtue as knowledge or as accruing through knowledge is not possible because there are no teachers of virtue. Hence virtue is possible only through correct opinion, only through memory, through hearsay, and this would be of course a complete vindication of Meno's fundamental posture, that you have to depend on memory. Yes?

Student: Here I'm a little confused because of what I raised before, in the sense that as far as action is concerned, correct opinion is to be as useful and can serve just as much a guide as knowledge. It seems that the problem is that if one knows it to be only opinion then one may be very hesitant to act upon it.

LS: No, if you have trust.

Same Student: But it's a difference as to what one believes. If I know that you know the right way and Mr. Reinken only has some opinion about it, then if you both told it to me I would be more willing to act on yours than on Mr. Reinken's.

[ix] In original: "true opinion," which supports Strauss's correction.

LS: Well, you would do great injustice to Mr. Reinken [laughter], who has a much better topographical sense than I have. But[71] think of some incidents in your own life: How often did you confidently take a course of action on the basis of an opinion which you regarded as good because you trusted in the man who transmitted to you that opinion?

Same Student: Isn't this because it's, for instance, a whole gradation of degrees, and the opinion can get—it's not either opinion or knowledge, but some opinion can have more—

LS: No, there are very clear cases. For example, whether you should turn this switch or that, which is not a matter of uncertainty. But there are people who know that, say, the engineer, and then there is a mere mechanic or maybe a mere cleaning man who[72] has been warned by the engineer: Don't ever do that. And the cleaning man will of course obey the engineer because of his concern with his own self-preservation, which is a strong incentive, and here you have a clear case of correct opinion. Now, that he cannot truly know, because the engineer might be a criminal and he might wish to have this houseman killed, perhaps because—I mean, there are *n* reasons why people try to kill other men and so, in other words, that could happen. But if we would be so distrustful, we would be in need of psychiatric treatment, ya? Although there are some cases in which distrust is justified,[73] [and they are exactly the reason why we need] prudence, you have to know where to be distrustful and where not to be distrustful. Yes?

Student: It seems to me still that where[ver][74] for instance the cleaning man who has been told, you know, which switch does not blow it off, he has right opinion; there might also be someone who knows nothing about this at all and yet says: Well, don't turn the switch on A because it will explode, and do turn it on B. Now on the assumption that he is right also,[75] [even though] he is just completely guessing, it's only insofar as I think that the decision is related to knowledge and not simply is right opinion that I'm willing to trust it at all. That the trust seems to me in acting on the decision[76] to be only insofar as I think there is a clear link between that and someone who does know. And insofar as its—

LS: Yes, I think that is what Socrates implies throughout. But the argument which is explicitly given to Meno is[77] in most cases to this effect: a man can be perfectly virtuous without having any knowledge but only correct opinion. That is the case. And especially if you read this part, as one cannot help reading it, in the light of what precedes: the apparent refutation of the view that virtue can be knowledge or can be acquired by knowledge. Then virtue must be something other than knowledge, and what could it be? Mere blindness is impossible—blind passion, that could never be virtue. But it could be something akin to virtue, something seeing in a sense—something in the intellect, let us say. And the next best thing is right opinion, true opinion. That this is not tenable ultimately is true and will be indicated later.

Mr. Reinken: Could this fit in to a reblackening of Meno's character? In the myth of Er, those who were good because they did what they'd heard, [and] one of those souls chose the life of the greatest tyranny. And this is sort of an acting out in this one: Meno's told

virtue is thinking what you've been told, by the right people, that is to say. And then he went off to Persia—he . . . do it underground.

LS: No, but there are people highest in the social hierarchy, be it the king of Persia, be it the landlords in Thessaly. Ya, that's the point. Yes, and therefore I see that the corruption follows [from] what—. But do they have right opinion, the king of Persia and the gentlemen in Thessaly? I don't think so. Yes?

Student: As far as bringing up the statesman as the paradigm of virtue, it's changed from conduct our affairs to guide along the road. It seems that the statesman is sort of the chain [which] makes it very ambiguous whether we're talking about statesmen or the teachers. It seems as if Socrates—

LS: Now why could a statesman not be a teacher?

Same Student: Except that it seems to me that given what Meno has said earlier about statesmen that that's not what Meno would conceive of.

LS: I believe the difficulty regarding statesmen is this, that we do not know clearly of what kind of virtue they are speaking: the virtue of man in general, of man as such, or the virtue of the statesman in particular. We must take up this coherently. We leave it only now at emphasizing the ambiguity. Yes, now we were at 97c6, ya?

Mr. Reinken: Yes. Socrates has said:

> right opinion is just as useful as knowledge.
> [MEN.] With this difference, Socrates, that he who has knowledge will always hit on the right way, whereas he who has right opinion will sometimes do so, but sometimes not.

LS: Now that is amazing, that Meno rises now in defense of the superiority of knowledge. In other words, Socrates had said that it doesn't make any difference: you are equally good whether you opine correctly or whether you know. And Meno is not satisfied with that, as you see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> How do you mean? Will not he who always has right opinion be always right, so long as he opines rightly?

LS: You see—so in other words, Socrates refutes him easily. He says again [that] correct opinion is no whit inferior to knowledge, as long as you have it. And the question is: Is this not the difficulty with opinions, that they have a tendency not to stay put? That will become clear in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

> It appears to me that he must; and therefore I wonder, Socrates, this being the case, that knowledge should ever be more prized than right opinion, and why they should be two distinct and separate things. (97c6-d3)

LS: Yes. You see, Meno comes back to his point which he raises here sensibly: if correct opinion is equal in price to knowledge, why is knowledge more highly prized than correct opinion? Or more generally, why[78] do knowledge and right opinion differ at all? You see, so far does Socrates go in suggesting that correct opinion—autonomous correct opinion, not with some wise, knowing man in the background—is the equal of knowledge. Are you now [79]satisfied as to this point, at any rate, that Socrates suggests this: that virtue could be correct opinion without any knowledge?[80] He suggests it; whether it is a sound suggestion, that we must see. Now Socrates, at any rate,[81] is now compelled by Meno to explain what the difference between knowledge and right opinion is. Yes?

Student: I thought that was the point of the question that he was asking, that if there's no such thing as knowledge then right opinion doesn't have much meaning either, and the only—

LS: Ya, that may be true, but you must also not forget one thing which happens in Plato's dialogues and also in real life very frequently: that there is a purely logical connection, meaning certain premises are made, accepted, and conclusions drawn; and people do not necessarily look beyond these syllogisms toward the facts.[82] The premises [and the syllogisms] may be quite plausible; the conclusions may be atrociously paradoxical. And [then] do not sometimes people believe[83] more in the atrocious conclusions from plausible premises than their own eyes? That happens not only in Platonic dialogues; and that is a part of the art of the rhetorician that he plays on this human failing and this human inclination.

Mr. Reinken: Could we say that Meno is really at his peak, that he almost seems to have learned something from Socrates? He came in asking for a jar of instant applied virtue, in effect: How do I get it; never mind what it is. And now he's digging in his heels against Socrates and is making the first step in inquiring what is knowledge by saying: Well, what difference is there between knowledge and right opinion?

LS: In a way, you are quite right. The question of what is knowledge. I say, I'm not so displeased with Meno's progress as Mr. Klein is. [Laughter] It is surely not wonderful progress, I mean, but it is quite remarkable for a man like him. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Socrates doesn't seem to be taking him in to school.

LS: No, no. It is an absolutely sensible question which he raised, there is no doubt about that. Now where were we now?

Mr. Reinken: d4.

LS: So Meno's question was so irrelevant . . . and Socrates raises now a question for next time.

Mr. Reinken:

Well, do you know why it is that you wonder, or shall I tell you?

LS: And Meno says: "Tell me."[x] So in other words, Meno doesn't know why he wonders, but Socrates regards it as possible that he, Socrates, knows why Meno wonders. Well, why does Meno wonder? (97d4-5)

Mr. Reinken:

It is because— (97d)

LS: No, no, I ask you, because we are not given— [laughter]. We must first try to understand that question,[84] because what Socrates tells Meno is not necessarily the true reason. What would you say? Why does Meno wonder? What would you say? Because he has understood something of the difference between knowledge and right opinion. In a hazy way, perhaps, he knows there is a difference between "I know" and "I'm sure of." In scholarly phrases you find very frequently that someone says: This means undoubtedly this. Now this means in all cases there is no proof. [Laughter] That is clear, otherwise they wouldn't say "undoubtedly"; they would give the proof. Now that may be correct opinion, but it is surely not more than opinion. Ya. Yes? Mr. Horowitz?

Mr. Horowitz: Does he perhaps learn this from what Anytus says about the sophists, because there's the clearest case of having right opinion without any knowledge.

LS: That would be possible.[85] [However], it was not even clear that it is right opinion, but in the best case, Anytus clearly lacked any experience which entitled him to say that. Yes, that is true. Then in the sequel (that is now too long for us to read) Socrates explains to Meno the difference between right opinion and knowledge. And the whole discussion from now on is based on this point: that virtue might accrue to men through correct opinion, and that this would be as good as virtue which accrues through knowledge. And since there are no teachers of virtue—we must never forget that—the virtue accruing through knowledge is by implication an impossibility. So we seem to be reduced to a virtue accruing through right opinion. The question of course arises: What is the source of that right opinion? And there can only be one answer: It must be superhuman. It accrues to man through divine allotment—that is the answer given later—and this may perhaps satisfy you for the time being. I do not know your name. Mr. Aronson? So[86] if it is of divine origin it can be presumed it to be true, solid, correct opinion. And we have to go into that question, too. But it is at least a provisional answer.[87]

But all the time it will be made clear that this is only the second-best case. Virtue based on correct opinion is second-rate virtue. It is second-hand virtue. And therefore we seem to be in a hopeless situation as to what virtue is. It cannot be knowledge, it cannot be blindness, and it cannot be correct opinion. Is it impossible then to act with tolerable

[x] In original: "Please tell me."

decency? Well, we see at the end that it is possible, because while we have no answer to the question of what virtue is—and surely [88]Meno [does not]—Socrates is able to give Meno a piece of advice which is to the effect that by making a man more gentle, you make him better. That is no complete answer to the question of what virtue is, because sometimes non-gentleness may be necessary for acting virtuously. But in peacetime, at any rate, for non-military men, we can say—and especially if you are engaged in conversations serving the purpose to find out the truth—gentleness is doubtless good. And so we have at least this piece of [advice, as] we will learn at the end. And this means in the context of the dialogue, [that] while Socrates[89] may have failed in everything, but there is at least a hope that he may have made Meno better for the time being. As little as the slave became a knower of this geometrical proposition but only followed Socrates well—he understood it at this time, but did not truly know it. He would be unable to prove it to a fellow slave, in all probability, but he would have to do it over and over again so that he would really command it. In the same way, Meno would have to sit with Socrates for some time, and then he would become a gentler man and therewith a better man. But of course we don't know whether the attraction of the Persian king's gold is not much greater than the attraction of becoming better, the attraction of virtue. So we will even on this level learn something about virtue. We'll take it up next time.[90]

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[1] Deleted "to remember"
[2] Deleted "depends of course."
[3] Deleted "go in."
[4] Deleted "occurs."
[5] Deleted "…was he…Has he become."
[6] Deleted "yeah."
[7] Deleted "you know? That."
[8] Deleted "That would be…."
[9] Deleted "And so in other words."
[10] Deleted "And well…."
[11] Deleted "only…it is."
[12] Deleted "And go…."
[13] Deleted "Like."
[14] Deleted "Now there are then…"
[15] Deleted "this."
[16] Deleted "not what he is talking…."
[17] Deleted "After all if you…."
[18] Deleted "That is…no, Socrates was very provocative to Anytus before, and his…unusually provocative, I would say. More than in the *Gorgias*."
[19] Deleted "I believe…Well at any rate the motivation may be that he wants…that he is sufficiently interested in the subject to stay on."
[20] Deleted "That is…and this is…."
[21] Deleted "would perhaps"
[22] Deleted "pays for teaching gentlemen the accomplish…who."
[23] Deleted "said he can answer…he was sitting down."
[24] Deleted "something…this is."
[25] Deleted "So…."
[26] Deleted "and Gorgias."
[27] Deleted "then."
[28] Deleted "largest part of the dialogue."
[29] Deleted "wishes to become well, in."
[30] Deleted "and of course a rhetorician…."
[31] Deleted "by more or less…"

[32] Deleted “The situation is….”
[33] Deleted “If we know….”
[34] Deleted “therefore”
[35] Deleted “This.” Moved “alone….”
[36] Deleted “based”
[37] Deleted “So this much about….”
[38] Deleted “Yes, now does….”
[39] Deleted “as much to say.”
[40] Deleted “but I…that is true….”
[41] Deleted “That being himself.”
[42] Deleted “Can you….”
[43] Deleted “…I did not…that is.”
[44] Deleted “..who are…take.”
[45] Deleted “is….”
[46] Deleted “to.”
[47] Deleted “…no.”
[48] Deleted “If you….”
[49] Deleted “And….”
[50] Deleted “That is….”
[51] Changed from “When he says…it is, I meant 86c7,c7, when Socrates asks him after the slave scene what is virtue, now after showing you that learning is possible.”
[52] Deleted “(one second).”
[53] Changed from “Socrates…this is a very great success, in a conversation with a man of dubious docility, that he…which he surely is, to bring about that he goes along with Socrates, although Socrates adapts the argument to Meno’s capacities.”
[54] Deleted “Because here.”
[55] Deleted “Was there….”
[56] Deleted “But he doesn’t….”
[57] Deleted “Prodicus….”
[58] Deleted “Protagoras and Prodicus…or.”
[59] Deleted “Now….”
[60] Deleted “Now what does….”
[61] Deleted “him, he trusts.”
[62] Deleted “Socrates….”
[63] Deleted “men of”
[64] Deleted “you….”
[65] Deleted “might….”
[66] Deleted “only opines which is the way…if he.’
[67] Deleted “for example, here.’
[68] Deleted “yeah.”
[69] Changed from “He would be a man…That would be a case of a man who opines correctly—he doesn’t know the reasons why—also, and which is not based on mere memory…which is not based on what others told him; he has a certain experience that this functions but he cannot give the reasons why. That would also go beyond him.”
[70] Deleted “are.”
[71] Deleted “how often….”
[72] Deleted “knows…who.”
[73] Deleted “but this is exactly the matter with.”
[74] Deleted “in.”
[75] Deleted “yet.”
[76] Deleted “…seems.”
[77] Deleted “to the effect.”
[78] Deleted “is….”
[79] Deleted “pleased”
[80] Deleted “That.”
[81] Deleted “must….”

[82] Changed from "Whether these syllogisms…You know, whether the conclusion…the premises may be quite plausible; the conclusions may be atrociously paradoxical."
[83] Deleted "then."
[84] Deleted ". Why does Meno…."
[85] Deleted "Because it was clear that…No."
[86] Deleted "here you have…."
[87] Deleted "And now then, some questions. But it will…."
[88] Deleted "not"
[89] Deleted "does not… Socrates."
[90] Deleted "Now let me only make a note,let's see: 97d."

Session 12: May 5, 1966

Leo Strauss: I say then that the question, What is virtue? is identical with the question, What is the principle of all value judgments? And no social scientist can avoid this question. In fact, every social scientist makes use of an answer to this question, whether he knows it or not. For example, the virtuous man, the good man, is the well-adjusted man, is one possible answer—which is easy to refute, but still that doesn't detract from its popularity. Or: the good man is the democratic personality. Or: the good man is the self-directed, autonomous, authentic man. These are all various answers, but the answers cannot be examined properly if one doesn't first state the question.

It is indeed true that the word "virtue," which we use all the time, is no longer used in social science or for that matter also in general parlance. You only have to compare Jane Austen to any contemporary novelist to see that something has greatly changed.[1] People speak much more, for example, of the self-directed man,[i] and the self-directed man is not necessarily virtuous. What has happened, and what is underlying the present unpopularity of virtue in[2] many levels of discourse, is that a substitute for virtue has been found, and this is freedom. For formerly freedom was understood to be subordinated to virtue. Virtue is a right use of freedom, but [only] the right use, and therefore it is higher than freedom in itself. And now this change from virtue to freedom is[3] in a way the most important change which has taken place in the last centuries, and if one wants to begin to understand it one would have to study such authors as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant in particular. Now this much only as a reminder that we are not oblivious of our first and most urgent duty.

Now let me remind you of the context in the *Meno* with which we stand. We had finished the slave scene. Is virtue teachable? The question was raised[4] and answered by Socrates in a way, without answering the question of what virtue is, in this form: What kind of things must virtue be in order to be teachable? It must be some kind of knowledge. And[5] Socrates proves that what makes our actions good, or anything good—whether within the soul or outside of it—is that it is rightly used, that it is prudently used. Virtue is prudence, or[6] prudence is the core of virtue. Prudence is a kind of knowledge. But if virtue is knowledge of one kind or another, it is teachable; and if it is teachable there must be teachers of virtue. But there are no teachers of virtue. Hence virtue is not knowledge. Is not virtue then altogether impossible? But then at this point, this question was raised by Meno, and then Socrates draws his attention to the alternative. There is a thing called right opinion which is as good a guide as far as our actions are concerned as knowledge. Perhaps virtue is possible in the form of correct or right opinion, or true opinion, and then indeed we would understand why there is virtue without there being any teachers of virtue. Because right opinion, it seems, cannot be taught.

That was the point at which we stopped last time, and we must go on. To my great regret, Mr. Reinken is not well, and I deplore it for his sake that he is not well, and I deplore it

[i] Riesman et al., *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

for our sake because we will not find, I am afraid, an equally good and trained reader. But I would like to have someone to take over. I have to think of people whom I know from experience. What about you, Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: . . .

LS: 97c. Page 361, Meno's third speech on this page, and there Mr. Lyons will begin.

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] It appears to me that he must; and therefore I wonder, Socrates, this being the case, that knowledge should ever be more prized than right opinion, and why they should be two distinct and separate things.
> [SOC.] Well, do you know why it is that you wonder, or shall I tell you?
> [MEN.] Please tell me.
> [SOC.] It is because you have not observed with attention the images of Daedalus.

LS: Now let us stop here one moment.[7] Socrates suggests the reason why Meno wonders in a somewhat roundabout way. He gives a reason which would not cast any discredit on Meno, because one has to know these statues of Daedalus, and maybe in Thessaly there are none. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> But perhaps there are none in your country.
> [MEN.] What is the point of your remark?
> [SOC.] That if they are not fastened up they play truant and run away; but, if fastened, they stay where they are.
> [MEN.] Well, what of that?
> [SOC.] To possess one of his works which is let loose does not count for much in value; it will not stay with you any more than a runaway slave: but when fastened up it is worth a great deal, for his productions are very fine things. And to what am I referring in all this? To true opinions. For these, so long as they stay with us, are a fine possession, and effect all that is good; but they do not care to stay for long, and run away out of the human soul, and thus are of no great value until one makes them fast with causal reasoning. And this process, friend Meno, is recollection, as in our previous talk we have agreed. But when once they are fastened, in the first place they turn into knowledge, and in the second, are abiding. And this is why knowledge is more prized than right opinion: the one transcends the other by its trammels. (97c11-98a8)

LS: And knowledge differs from correct opinion by the bond, namely, the bond which knowledge supplies. Yes. Now the first point to observe is that of course that there are no such statues, and the suggestion that Meno never paid any attention to that because he had never seen them is an obvious joke. But there is some more to that. There are a few points in Klein's comment [at] which we might look; page 248. Because "causal reasoning" is a very bad translation here, although it is in a way a literal translation, but we would need some[thing like] "the figuring out of the cause," "figuring out of the

ground." And that is not necessarily causal reasoning, which means today discovery of the efficient or material cause.[8] It means in the first place to figure out the "what is," to make clear, to understand the "what is" in question. Yes,[9] [begin reading] in the middle of this long paragraph. "Knowledge, like right opinion."

Mr. Lyons:

> can be lost, can be forgotten, can "run out of the human soul." In that sense knowledge is no less unstable than right opinion. Only knowledge of the kind *phronēsis* seems immune to forgetfulness. The exercise of wise judgment can hardly be "forgotten." Is not a man who *keeps* opining rightly, relying on what he was reliably told, a man known for exercising wise judgment simply because his wisdom consists in recognizing the wisdom of others? Does not such a man, too, possess human excellence and is he not indeed able to guide us in our actions?[ii]
>
> The theme of recollection reappears stripped of all mythical connotations. Recollection is now identified with the "binding" of right opinions to which we subscribed "from hearsay." To "bind" them means to find reasons for them in one's own thinking.[iii]

LS: Ya, that is better, to say it in this way than to translate [it as] "causal reasoning." The difference between [sound or right] opinions[10] and knowledge is that the man of right opinion does not know why it is so, why he takes this way to Larissa, because the fact that he has been told by somebody else doesn't give him the true reason why this is the way. Now[11] the main point is this, that Socrates here flatly contradicts his earlier defense of right opinion or true opinion. True opinions do not last; they are not reliable. They become reliable only by this refiguring out of the cause by our understanding of why they are correct. The simple example of that difference would be if you have a law, a bald prohibition against a certain kind of action, and the knowledge and appreciation of the reason why this prohibition is sound. So it is now perfectly clear again that sound opinion or correct opinion is not equal to knowledge; and[12] now is it also made clear, at least provisionally, what is the crucial difference: the man of knowledge knows the why, which the man of right opinion does not. And now what does Meno reply?

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] Upon my word, Socrates—

LS: "By Zeus."

Mr. Lyons:

> By Zeus, Socrates, it seems to be very much as you say. (98a9)

LS: Now Meno confirms his agreement, such as it is, with an oath. Perhaps the agreement is not so full[y persuasive], but the oath would perhaps supply that effect. Yes?

[ii] Klein inserts the number 3 at the beginning of the next paragraph.
[iii] Klein, 248.

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] And indeed I too speak as one who does not know but only conjectures: yet that there is a difference between right opinion and knowledge is not at all a conjecture with me but something I would particularly assert that I knew: there are not many things of which I would say that, but this one, at any rate, I will include among those that I know. (98b1-5)

LS: So Socrates knows that correct opinion is something different from knowledge. The phrasing reminds—yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, I want to ask something that has something to do with the idea that the dialogue did something that peaked at the time of the telling of the myth, and eventually there is a decline through the slave scene, and there is a lack of clarity and so forth. Well, this has something of the same character as the paragraph at the end of the myth where he says: Well, we don't really know too much about that, I'm not sure, but this I know for sure.

LS: Let us read that passage, 86b6 following. No, begin perhaps at b1, so that we have the full context.

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] And if the truth of all things that are is always in our soul, then the soul must be immortal; so that you should take heart and, whatever you do not happen to know at present—that is, what you do not remember—you must endeavour to search out and recollect?
> [MEN.] What you say commends itself to me, Socrates, I know not how.
> [SOC.] And so it does to me, Meno. Most of the points I have made in support of my argument are not such as I can confidently assert; but that the belief in the duty of inquiring after what we do not know will make us better and braver and less lazy[iv] than the notion that there is not even a possibility of discovering what we do not know, nor any duty of inquiring after it—this is a point for which I am determined to do battle, so far as I am able, both in word and deed. (86b1-c2)

LS: Yes. You must see the obvious parallelism of the two passages. So what does Socrates then know—I mean, he says he knows that true opinion is different from knowledge. He says there are some other things which he also knows, but very little. Which does he know in addition to that, because they are implied in the insight that true opinion and knowledge differ by virtue of the fact that knowledge gives the reason why, whereas true opinion lacks the knowledge of the reason why. Yes?

Student:[13] Would this be another case supporting your point that Socrates is somebody who already in a sense knows? Because it seems that you can't distinguish between knowledge and right opinion unless you have some knowledge, and—

[iv] In original: "helpless." Strauss had indicated his preference for "lazy" when this passage was first read.

LS: Yes. In other words, he has knowledge of knowledge; this he must have. But here he speaks only of the fact that he knows the difference. But he knows more than that there is a difference; he knows that knowledge is higher than right opinion. Yes?

Same Student: But it seems that[14] if you just had right opinion, you can't tell whether it is knowledge.

LS: That is a great difficulty, in other words, whether this suggestion that we could live as well on the basis of right opinion without anyone having knowledge who might guide us[15] doesn't work. That is quite true. But let us now first see what is immediately involved here. Knowledge differs from right opinion. Well, that means that knowledge is higher than right opinion. And this has a third implication: that we must strive if we can for knowledge, because our right opinions are not good enough. We may not be able to do that. That is another matter which is not here discussed.

Now to come back to Mr. Shulsky's question. You mean to say that[16] the comparison of these two parallel passages agrees or does not agree with what I said earlier about a descent taking place?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, it would seem not to agree, because it would seem that here is another point at which Socrates is simply speaking, you know, what he simply knows. I mean, I would take it that that part of the dialogue where you are so to speak closest to the truth, without it being modified to the capacity of the interlocutors, is the peak, and the parts where he's speaking very ironically are the descents.

LS: You could strengthen your argument by saying that whereas in the earlier passage he had spoken of recollection, which is mythical speech, here he replaces [it with] a non-mythical expression, the figuring out of the cause, of the why, for the mythical expression. But that is perhaps taking a somewhat narrow view; perhaps we have to take a broader view. And I'm perfectly willing to retract what I have said, but let us only see at the end of our reading of the text of the *Meno* whether it still makes sense to say that there is a descent or not. Is this all right? But at a certain moment, it seemed that there was a descent. Good. Yes?

Student: Perhaps you'll want to postpone this 'til the end, but it seems that there is a significant difference between the two passages in what Socrates knows and the way he knows. In the first one, he knows that it will make us better and braver men if knowledge is possible, or if we believe knowledge is possible. But he doesn't say [that] he knows that knowledge is possible. He simply says—except for the myth, which he admits later is somewhat of a conjecture—that here he knows that there is a difference between right opinion and knowledge.

LS: In other words—

Same Student: It isn't a question of making us more virtuous.

LS: In other words, you would say that the second passage supplies us with a more solid piece of knowledge than the first does? Is that what you mean?

Same Student: The[17] [second] passage is knowledge about us.[18] The first passage is knowledge about what would be good for us to believe. The second passage is knowledge about what is, whether it's good for us or not.

LS: Yes, but it implies—

Same Student: It might seem to be more . . . yes.

LS: Yes. So in other words, the second passage gives us the reason why the[19] hope expressed in the first passage is sound. Is that it? Knowledge[20] is different from right opinion, but that means knowledge is higher than right opinion. And therefore, by striving for knowledge we become better, more insightful than if we were to leave it at right opinion which, in the moment we are aware that there is such a thing as knowledge, has lost its compelling power over us.

Same Student: But he hasn't established, that I can see, that knowledge is possible, only that it's good for us to believe that knowledge is possible.

LS: Ya, but still we have some knowledge here: that knowledge differs from right opinion. That we have. Of course that is very little because what Socrates says, knowledge means to know why, this is not sufficient, and it's only a beginning of an explanation of what knowledge is, but it is not negligible. Ya. Yes?

Mr. Burnam: I would say that that would perhaps qualify Mr. Shulsky's point about there perhaps not being a decline, because in the second we would seem to have a [truth of a purely] formal character—knowledge is distinguished from right opinion by the fact that it is aware of the reason why—whereas the first truth, you could say, is higher in rank because it's not of a formal character but one which concerns the goodness or badness of the soul.

LS: Yes. Well, why don't we postpone it until the whole evidence is in—this, on Mr. Shulsky's point.

Student: Just a technical question. When you were saying that Meno swears four times, are these including the places we just corrected the translations of?

LS: Yes. Yes, yes. I made it on the basis of the Greek, of course. No, no, you cannot do it on the basis of a translation, because they say—I do not know what expressions they use from time to time—"in the heavens," or "for heaven's sake," or such. No, no, you have also to know the precise wording of these[21] [oaths]. You know Socrates, for example, swears sometimes "By Hera," who is Zeus's sister and wife, and this is an oath characteristic of women, you see; and that makes a great difference whether Socrates

swears properly as a man would swear or swears a women's oath. You have to do this on the basis of the text; translations will not do. Good. Now what is Meno's reply?

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] Yes, and you are right, Socrates, in so saying. (98b6)

LS: Yes. Meno here agrees quite soberly, you see. And this is intelligible, for this was the point at which he himself had been driving in 97c to d, you know, where he reminded Socrates, who had become enthusiastic about the virtue of true opinion, say[ing]: But still, don't we esteem knowledge more highly than right opinion? So he is now satisfied. Let me see, there is another point in Klein, but we don't have to read much more of it now. Yes, let us read on page 250, the central paragraph.

Mr. Lyons:

> What follows is a quick and yet strangely involved summary of almost all that has been said after, and even before, Anytus had appeared on the scene. This summary is given by Socrates with a view to a new and better understanding of human excellence. But what he says is completely overshadowed by Meno's and Anytus' *amathia*.

LS: *Amathia* means imbecility, inability to learn. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> Accordingly, no more light is brought to bear on the subject. *Epistēmē, phronēsis,* [and] *sophia* are used—

LS: "Knowledge, prudence, and wisdom are used interchangeably."

Mr. Lyons:

> Opinion, and mostly false opinion, reigns supreme. Only occasionally does Socrates pierce that curtain. And in the wake of this cursory and, in part even incoherent, recapitulation the argument made about "right opinion" appears curiously modified.[v]

LS: Ya, what do you say about a remark of this kind: "Quick," "strangely involved," "cursory," and "in part even incoherent recapitulation?" What do you say about that? On the basis of what we expect from a Platonic dialogue, I think we have to say this: Why does Socrates do that? It is imprudent to say Plato got tired toward the end of the book [laughter], [or] because some printer's devil was waiting for the next edition. Socrates must have his reason for talking so incoherently and so superficially, and we must try [to see] whether we can find out that reason. Yes. Let us go on where we left off, in 98b7.

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] Well, then, am I not right also in saying that true opinion leading the way renders the effect of each action as good as knowledge does?

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[v] Klein, 250.

[MEN.] There again, Socrates, I think you speak the truth.

LS: So Socrates, in other words, returns to his old phrase,[22] [presenting] that [guidance supplied by] true opinion as equal to that supplied by knowledge. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

[SOC.] So that right opinion will be no whit inferior to knowledge in worth or usefulness as regards our actions, nor will the man who has right opinion be inferior to him who has knowledge.
[MEN.] That is so.
[SOC.] And you know that the good man has been admitted by us to be useful.
[MEN.] Yes. (98b7-c7)

LS: Now let us stop here. So you see Socrates retracts here the crucial distinction made by him between knowledge and right opinion, at least as far as actions are concerned. And that is of course an important qualification. Maybe the man who is told by somebody else that he should act in this and this situation in this and this way acts as well as the man who does not have to be told. But that is not obvious.[23] [Nonetheless], it could be [believable] prior to investigation. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

[SOC.] Since then it is not only because of knowledge that men will be good and useful to their country, where such men are to be found—

LS: Socrates reminds us again of the fact that it is still doubtful whether there are any virtuous men. So begin again this paragraph in which you were interrupted.

Mr. Lyons:

Since then it is not only because of knowledge—

LS: "Since then good men would be not only through knowledge and so also useful to the cities, if there are such men, but also through correct opinion."[vi] Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

and since neither of these two things—knowledge and true opinion—is a natural property of mankind, being acquired—or do you think that either of them is natural? (97c8-98d2)

LS: Ya, that is a difficult passage. The[24] traditional text reads: "neither natural nor acquired."[25] And this seems to be difficult and therefore some corrections of the text have been suggested. You might read what Klein says on page 251, but we do not have to take this [up] now. His point is—and not only his—is that this original reading is correct and

[vi] The Loeb translation, which is never read out fully in class, reads: "Since then it is not only because of knowledge that men will be good and useful to their country, where such men are to be found, but also on account of right opinion," and then continues at 98c10 as read by Mr. Lyons.

there is no reason to change it, although it is not quite clear what he and the others who defend the text mean to say. The main point: if there are virtuous men, they are virtuous either through knowledge or through right opinion. But neither knowledge nor right opinion comes to man by nature, meaning without any effort on his part, at the moment of his birth, as it were; nor are they acquired. That is what the text says; and that is difficult to solve, to settle this difficulty. But one point is clear. Correct opinion is now said not to come by nature. So in other words, a possibility which we discussed last time, that there are men who are good guessers by nature, this is tacitly excluded.[26] Correct opinion comes only through hearing the knowers or people who in any other way can guide well other men. Yes. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Lyons:

> Not I.
> [SOC.] Then if they are not natural, good people cannot be good by nature either.
> [MEN.] Of course not.
> [SOC.] And since they are not an effect of nature, we next considered whether virtue can be taught.
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And we thought it teachable if virtue is wisdom?

LS: "Prudence."

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And if teachable, it must be prudence[vii]?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] And it there were teachers, it could be taught, but if there were none, it could not?
> [MEN.] Quite so.
> [SOC.] But surely we acknowledged that it had no teachers?
> [MEN.] That is true.
> [SOC.] Then we acknowledged it neither was taught nor was prudence?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] But yet we admitted— (98d3-e9)

LS: Let us stop here, perhaps.[27] Socrates repeats the proof that virtue is not teachable; nor is it prudence or knowledge. Now let us first draw the conclusion from that. If this is so, if virtue is not teachable and it is not prudence or knowledge, then virtue can only be correct opinion. And at the same time, it cannot be teachable. But the latter point, that it cannot be taught, would seem to vindicate completely Meno's original position to the extent to which Meno was a pupil of Gorgias. Gorgias said [that] virtue is not teachable. Then if this is so, if virtue is not teachable, it is of course unreasonable to make an effort to learn. The *argos logos*, the lazy *logos* which Meno stated in a very general way, seems to be perfectly vindicated. Now why does Socrates do that, after he has moved Meno away from Gorgias in the direction of Protagoras, of the man who said virtue is

[vii] In original: "wisdom." Mr. Lyons is following Strauss's cue here and later in the passage.

teachable? Well, we cannot answer this question, but we must raise it before we have seen what Socrates suggests as to the manner in which virtue can be acquired. We know now—"know" in quotation marks—that virtue does not come to man by nature, nor does it come to him by teaching. How does it come to him? And here we continue. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: In 98d12, there's a [statement that] I don't understand. That statement is not necessary to the argument, and I just wondered why it's made.

LS: No, to make clear that this is convertible, that the two statements are convertible.

Mr. Bruell: In other words, does it raise the possibility that opinion—I mean, it makes you think of the possibility that opinion might be teachable, but they have this agreement—

LS: Well, what I see at the surface of it is only this: if virtue is prudence, then it is teachable. And if it is teachable,[28] [then] virtue is prudence. So they are convertible. I do not see more at the moment, at least. But you may see more, and then you must help me.

Mr. Bruell: Well, I just wondered because of this. The conclusion of the argument is that since virtue is not teachable, it can't be prudence. And to reach that conclusion it's not necessary to say that if it is teachable it is prudence. That conclusion follows rather from the first[29] statement in d10.

LS: Yes. In other words, he could have omitted d12 without any difficulty. It seems so, but that isn't good enough. Why did he bring it in? Yes. I cannot give you an answer.[30] Perhaps some things can be understood in retrospect. Let us go on where we left [off]. So the conclusion is, to come back to the main point: virtue doesn't come to man by nature, nor by teaching. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] But yet we admitted it was a good?
> [MEN.] Yes.
> [SOC.] And that which guides rightly is useful and good?
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] And that there are only two things—true opinion and knowledge—that guide rightly and a man guides rightly if he have these; for things that come about by chance do not occur through human guidance; but where a man is a guide to what is right we find these two things—true opinion and knowledge.
> [MEN.] I agree. (98e9-99a6)

LS: Now Socrates falls back to the common ground, since otherwise they are in a great perplexity. Virtue is useful, and the useful is what guides us correctly. But we are guided correctly only by two things: correct opinion or knowledge. There seems to be an alternative to the two: we might get the useful things by chance; that means not by human guidance, i.e., without any virtue. Whether this would be of any value, if all good things

would come like hamburgers, ready and juicy hamburgers, flown into our mouth—whether this would be a desirable condition is another matter. It surely wouldn't have anything to do with virtue, because they would flow by themselves. We are concerned with virtue because virtue is more dependable than chance, because even if the things all fly into your mouth, you still have to open your mouth at the right moment, which is then an act of prudence. So we cannot do without virtue or prudence under any conditions. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] I agree.
> [SOC.] Well now, since virtue is not taught, we no longer take it to be knowledge?

LS: He means always "teachable," ya? Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> Apparently not.

LS: To repeat, to emphasize: virtue is not knowledge—now it is not called prudence but knowledge—since it is not teachable. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> So of two good and useful things one has been rejected: knowledge cannot be our guide in political conduct. (99a6-99b3)

LS: "In political action." And Meno says: "It doesn't seem so." So whereas formerly[31] [Socrates] had spoken of virtue *tout court*, virtue in general, he speaks now again about the virtue of the statesman. We have seen this shifting back and forth before, and we must keep this in mind.

Student: That was my question: Why the shift back?

LS: Well, that is a part of the whole confusion. And we must discuss it coherently later. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC]: Therefore it was not by any wisdom, nor because they were wise, that the sort of men we spoke of controlled their states—Themistocles and the rest of them, to whom our friend Anytus[viii] was referring a moment ago. For this reason it was that they were unable to make others like unto themselves—because their qualities were not an effect of knowledge.
> [MEN.] The case is probably as you say, Socrates.

[viii] Mr. Lyons had put too strong an emphasis on the second syllable, mispronouncing the Greek upsilon like the English counterpart "y"; therefore Strauss corrects him.

> [SOC.] And if not by knowledge, as the only alternative it must have been by good opinion. This is the means which statesmen employ for their direction of states— (99b4-c2)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for a moment. Socrates vindicates now the honor of the four great Athenian statesmen, Themistocles and the others. He makes, as it were, a peace offer to Anytus and to the city of Athens. The Athenian statesmen cannot be blamed for their lack of knowledge and for the ensuing lack of the ability to teach others their statesmanship, for knowledge in this sphere is impossible; and that means of course in this sphere there is only correct opinion, and this they had. Themistocles saw quite well what he had to do in order to build the Athenian walls without Sparta interfering, and he was very clever at that, you know. The term which is used at the end of b, in b11, *eudoxia*, means good repute everywhere else, but it is used here in the sense of good at opining, a man who opines well. And now this can be inverted. Men good at opining, like Themistocles, are known to be such to others (who also lack knowledge, of course) only by opinion, by reputation—true or false. The point which quite a few of you have seen, [is that] correct opinion is not knowable as such, except by the knower. Yes? Now begin this and read slowly this whole paragraph in which I interrupted you.

Mr. Lyons: "And if not by knowledge, as the only alternative it must have been by good opinion."

LS: Ya, more simply translated, "by good reputation," "by good fame," i.e., fame which is not based on knowledge on the part of the statesman[32] [any more than] of the people who praise him. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] This is the means which statesmen employ for their direction of states, and they have nothing more to do with prudence than soothsayers and diviners; for these people utter many a true thing when inspired, but have no knowledge of anything they say.
> [MEN.] I daresay that is so. (99b11-c6)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates makes now clear beyond the shadow of a doubt what correct opinion as a habit means: to be like a seer. You remember that Anytus seemed to prove to be a seer; he had correct opinion about the worthlessness of the sophists without any basis in knowledge for that. He just smelled it, in a way, or heard it from others.[33] Correct opinion, at least in the case of the statesman, [is based on divine inspiration]. Yes?

Student: When Socrates excluded chance, he gave as his reason that chance[34] is not due to human direction. Now if true opinions are put in the mouths of statesmen by divine inspiration, that would also not be due to human direction.

LS: Yes. But still,[35] [true opinion] would be present in man. Then these divinely-inspired men would guide other human beings by something present in them. But you are right.[36] He foreshadowed what he says now by this reference to chance; there is no doubt about

it. But there is some difference, because the simple case of chance would be that good things come to us and we have no control over that, and it doesn't depend in any way on our purposeful action. But in this case, this inspired man can guide human beings, can tell them: Do that, do that, which would not be the case if there were only chance not mediated by the divinely-inspired man. Of course, such people, as is indicated by the fact [that] they tell many true things,[37] are not always correct. That would be to expect too much. They are either mere mouthpieces so that they do not even know what they say, like the priestess of the Pythia at Delphi, or if they know what they say, they are unable to give an account of the truth of what they say, and in this sense, in this somewhat metaphoric[al] sense, they do not know what they say. Is the difference clear? [38] They might literally not know but simply be in a state of trance, where they say something without knowing what they say. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] And may we, Meno, rightly call those men divine, who, having no understanding, yet succeed in many a great deed and word?
> [MEN.] Certainly.

LS: Yes. They deserve to be called divine men because of the origin of their knowledge or their quasi-knowledge. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] Then we shall be right in calling those divine of whom we spoke just now as soothsayers and prophets and all of the poetic turn; and especially we can say of the statesmen that they are divine and enraptured, as being inspired and possessed of God, when they succeed—

LS: Ya, "Of the god," of the god in whose sphere this particular kind of thing falls. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> when they succeed in speaking many great things, while knowing nought of what they say.
> [MEN.] Certainly.

LS: So in other words, the statesmen who have this inspiration belong together with the poets. So they belong to the best society, we can say. That is in a way a high compliment. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] And the women too, I presume, Meno, call good men divine; and the Spartans, when they eulogize a good man, say—"He is a divine person."

LS: Ya, or "divine man." Now Socrates speaks here again of divine men, not divine statesmen in particular. And of manhood, women are the best judges. That Socrates somehow implies, and therefore it is important that the women say so—but not only

women but also the Spartans, the enemies of the Athenian democracy and therewith of Anytus in particular, Yes.

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] And to all appearance, Socrates, they are right; though perhaps our friend Anytus may be annoyed at your statement. (99c7-e2)

LS: "Our friend" is a wholly superfluous addition of the translator. "Anytus here will be angry at you." Meno agrees with the Spartan view that the good men are divine men. He takes the side of Socrates against Anytus, which is quite a thing. Yes?

Student: Mr. Strauss, I wanted to ask a question at this point. Klein gives a different rendering of this particular passage—

LS: Where?

Same Student: On page 255, in the middle of the page, he alleges that it is Socrates who says Anytus may be annoyed, and that it is Meno who says: Well, I can't help that.

LS: Ya, well that is a change of the text not justified here. He refers to Friedlander and Bluck, whom I have been unable to look up. And I would[39] like to see an argument why this doesn't make sense.

Same Student: I just wondered if this was an aspect of Klein's—

LS: No, no, that is based on an emended text, and [to determine] whether the emendation is sound, one would have to hear the argument; I do not know it. And I do not see any reason for changing the text, because it makes perfect sense. We have seen this before, that Meno is closer to Socrates than Anytus is. However far removed Meno may be from Socrates, he is a bit—and we'll find more evidence in the sequel. Yes. Now what does Socrates say about this threat, as it were, that Anytus might blame him for denying that the great Athenian statesmen, including himself, have knowledge and are not superior as, say, to ordinary soothsayers? Yes.

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] For my part, I care not. As for him, Meno, we will converse with him some other time.

LS: Socrates is unconcerned with Anytus's possible resentment. He refers to a future conversation or dialogue with Anytus. Where do we find that? [Laughter] We do find it.

Student: *The Apology.*

LS: *The Apology* is explicitly called a dialogue, but there we must say the dialogue is rather with Meletus, the other accuser, the poet who accused Socrates, and above all with the city of Athens in general than with Anytus in particular. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> At the moment, if through all this discussion our queries and statements have been correct, virtue is found to be neither natural nor teachable[ix], but is imparted to us by a divine dispensation without understanding in those who receive it, unless there should be somebody— (99e3-100a1)

LS: Now let us stop here. Socrates summarizes now the whole conversation, answering the question as to how virtue is acquired. You remember, that was the question with which the whole thing started. Virtue comes to men through divine allotment. Plato frequently[40] says of what comes to men by nature, that it comes to him through divine allotment. You'll find a collection of passages in England's commentary on Plato's *Laws*, 642c8.[41] [So this passage] could mean virtue comes by nature, but this would have to be properly understood, because nature is only a condition of virtue in any case. But it is an important condition, of course. Take the simple and extreme case of a moronic man who can never become virtuous, but there are also other cases of non-moronic men who are not able to acquire virtue in the highest sense.

Now this nature, the variety of human natures and their relevance for virtue, has been neglected throughout this dialogue. Some men are singularly gifted for virtue, and the greatest example occurring in Plato's dialogues is of course Socrates. And Socrates's peculiarity is called by Socrates himself in the Platonic dialogues his daimonic thing, *daimonion*, which[42] has been interpreted in modern times as conscience or something of this kind—which cannot be true because Socrates says [that] only very few people have it, whereas as the conscience goes, it is supposed to be effective in all men. What the *daimonion* means becomes clearest, as far as I can see, in a dialogue now generally rejected as spurious, called the *Theages*,[x] where Socrates is asked by a young man and his father whether he would[43] [like to] become a teacher of this young man, the young man being Theages. This young man wants to become a tyrant and would like to acquire the necessary knowledge by conversing with Socrates; and Socrates says, first, being a polite man:[44] I am an erotic man, and that depends therefore on my being attracted. He is very reticent but he states that; and they do not understand it, that an old bearded man should talk about such nonsense. And then he says: Now, I'll give you another reason. I have this *daimonion*, and this *daimonion* opposes that; and then he tells a marvelous story of what once the *daimonion* did, stories which would be called superstitious by most present-day people. And therefore the dialogue has been regarded as spurious because it is unworthy of Socrates to tell such fantastic stories. But Socrates tells all kinds of stories, and you would have to look at Theages and his father and make their intimate acquaintance before you can judge whether it was not the wisest thing of Socrates in this situation to tell these fantastic stories. In brief, I would say the daimonic thing, this peculiar *erōs* which Socrates has, this is Socrates's peculiar nature. He is singularly attracted by the[45] desire for knowledge and therefore also by promising people who may also be guided toward knowledge. This only in passing. But you see here *daimonion*, what is daimonic, is in Greek almost the same as what is divine. If you want to make a

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[ix] In original: "taught"

[x] Strauss spells the name Theages.

distinction, the daimonic is somewhat lower than the divine, but the kinship is there and it is proper to mention it when here the divine origin of virtue is mentioned. Yes?

Student:[46] In the *Crito* he mentions a voice, his own god which would always tell him when not to do something. Is that—

LS: Ya, that's the same. That also [appears] in other dialogues. Now read again this whole sentence, Mr. Lyons.

Mr. Lyons: Yes sir.

> At the moment,[47] if through all this discussion our queries and statements have been correct, virtue is found to be neither natural nor teachable,[xi] but is imparted to us by a divine dispensation without understanding in those who receive it, unless there should be somebody among the statesmen capable of making a statesman of another.

LS: I.e., although he deliberately refrains from saying so: unless he is able to teach statesmanship. But he avoids this . . . You remember Themistocles [48]could not make a statesman out of his son, and the others too who were mentioned there.

Mr. Lyons:

> And if there should be any such, he might fairly be said to be among the living what Homer says Teiresias was among the dead—"He alone has comprehension; the rest are flitting shades." In the same way he on earth, in respect of virtue, will be a real substance among shadows. (99e4-100a7)

LS: "The true thing in regard to virtue." Now Socrates returns again to the virtue of the statesman, as you see, and he returns again to the possibility that there might be a statesman who could make another man a statesman.[49] The man who can make another a statesman would of course have to possess knowledge and therefore be able to teach political virtue. Compared with such a man, those men who administer the city on the basis of correct opinion through divine allotment would be like shades, phantoms, in regard to virtue. He[50] refers here to Homer. That's the only reference to Homer in the dialogue. Homer ascribes Teiresias's superiority to a gift by Persephone, the wife of Pluto, i.e., to divine allotment, so that even this highest virtue, the true virtue would be due to divine virtue. Socrates reminds us again here quite clearly of the supremacy of knowledge and by implication of the need for knowledge. Yes. Now[51] what is Meno's reaction?

Mr. Lyons:

> [MEN.] "I think you put it excellently, Socrates."

LS: Ya. Well, "you seem to me to speak most finely, most beautifully, most nobly, Socrates." Meno fully agrees with Socrates's statement. There were other cases of this kind, but this is Meno's last word, as you can see, in the dialogue. Socrates and Meno are

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[xi] In original: "taught."

or seem to be in complete agreement over against Anytus. Now if virtue, regardless of whether it is knowledge or correct opinion, accrues to men through divine allotment, one cannot do anything about its acquisition. This I repeat again. But this has become now doubtful, because the possibility that[52] virtue might be possible in and through knowledge has been restated. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> [SOC.] Then the result of our reasoning, Meno, is found to be that virtue comes to us by a divine dispensation, when it does come.

LS: "To whom it comes." Ya. Virtue *tout court*—I mean, not virtue limited to the statesman—comes through divine allotment. One cannot acquire it by human effort. Since Socrates and Meno admittedly lack virtue they must get resigned to their defect of virtue. [53] [resign themselves to vice, or at best a defective virtue]. But that's terrible. Yet some hope is left, namely, what he says in the sequel.

Mr. Lyons:

> But the certainty of this we shall only know when, before asking in what way virtue comes to mankind, we set about inquiring what virtue is, in and by itself.

LS: So the hope is that perhaps they have made a mistake. They must return to the abandoned question of what is virtue, so the attempt to evade it or avoid it has led to a very unsatisfactory solution. So we now see how right Socrates was when he insisted that he should raise the question: What is virtue? Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> It is time now for me to go my way, but do you persuade our friend Anytus—

LS: Of course, "this guest friend Anytus, here," who is present all the time. Ya?

Mr. Lyons:

> this guest friend[xii] Anytus here of that whereof you are now yourself persuaded, so as to put him in a gentler mood; for if you can persuade him, you will do a good turn to the people of Athens also. (100b1-c2)

LS: Yes. "To the Athenians also." Now here we learn what Meno can do, since he will not make an effort to acquire knowledge. Must he abandon himself to a life of vice? Is he not capable of a single good deed? No, he is capable at least of a single good deed. We see that now. Meno has been persuaded that virtue is due to the gods, i.e., not to the fathers, as Anytus had said all the time,[54] and that the wisdom of the statesman is at best correct opinion and hence inferior to philosophy as quest for wisdom. Hence, that he has learned. Hence, he can perhaps persuade Anytus, who has never learned of the truth of these points, and thus make him more modest and therewith more gentle, and that would be a benefit to the Athenians—in a low way of course also to Socrates. But Socrates doesn't think of him[self] in particular. But if we think of Socrates in particular, we can

[xii] In original: "our friend."

say Socrates's only hope in Athens is that Meno, of all people, might have some influence on Anytus. Meno is better than Anytus. That is at least imaginable. So Socrates persuades Meno. And that is[55] [a] great success. Now Socrates does not strictly speaking teach Meno, but he has taught—if we are not too choosy and use the word teaching in a loose sense—he taught Meno's slave. He taught the slave. He persuades Meno, but he cannot persuade Anytus. Anytus could only be persuaded, if at all, by Meno.[56]

We can now [57][give an overview of] the action of the dialogue. Socrates has surely tamed Meno. His resistance has ceased a long time ago. And if you would look up these passages which show the last resistance, and especially the outburst of the feeling of superiority to Socrates right at the beginning, you will see there was a steady progress toward this taming. Socrates did not undertake the hopeless task of trying to convince Meno of the goodness of justice. You remember, Meno simply said when Socrates brings up justice: Of course, justice. And Socrates didn't say: But why do you say "Of course"? He didn't go into it. You remember that. He did not try to convince him of the goodness of justice as he does in the case of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, for example. Yet while not teaching him and proving to him that justice is good, Socrates made Meno more just. You can make people just without teaching them the goodness of justice, namely, he made him more just precisely by taming him, by making him more gentle, by making him submit to Socrates's guidance. He made Meno better to the extent to which this was possible in a single conversation. It is then possible to make men better by speech; after all, Socrates did not give him an example of virtue, say, by helping a poor man or so, no action of this kind, but by speaking with him. It is possible to make men better by *logos*, but not all men. And the living proof here is of course Anytus, where there is no possibility of a conversation. This is shown to be possible if the guide himself is better: Socrates. One could say that Socrates's taming of Meno implies quite a bit of compromising with Meno, doing favors to Meno—you remember, the term was used: "I will do you that favor." Above all, Socrates vindicates Meno's original position, whereas he provokes Anytus. And so you mustn't be unfair to Anytus, and you can't blame him if he gets angry if he is so strongly provoked. Yet why does Socrates vindicate Meno's original position? Because Meno is incapable of learning, and therefore for him this lazy *logos* is a sound maxim. I mean, he cannot live[58] [by] any other maxim, yet he persuades Meno to admit the superiority of knowledge to correct opinion and thus to be more modest, to be better.

Now we have now to go into a coherent discussion in the first place of the end of the *Meno*, and in the second place of the *Meno* as a whole, because the earlier parts will look different after we have seen the end. And we must combine this somehow with a discussion of the digressions of Klein in his commentary on recollection and memory, and on stereometry, or—what is the English expression for that?

Mr. Lyons: Measurement of volumes, solids.

LS: Solids. Now let us begin such a coherent discussion of the end of the *Meno*. And let us start from Socrates's last word on the primary subject which occurs at 100b2 to 3.

"Virtue comes to us, at least to those to whom it comes, by divine allotment."[xiii] This is clearly—however questionable and ambiguous it is, this is [surely] audible to everyone, even to the most superficial reader and to the most superficial hearer. It is surely audible to Meno. And we must consider how this will affect Meno. The effect which Socrates desires, that Meno talks to Anytus, this is not necessarily the full effect, of course. That would be the most desirable effect. Virtue as correct opinion accrues to a man by divine allotment. What lesson must we draw from this?

Now let us read the very end of Klein's comment. "Here the dialogue ends. The prospect of a conversation between Meno and Anytus has its charms. But we, the readers and witnesses of the dialogue, have to continue the search for human excellence on our own."[xiv59] Surely it is a clear thing: we cannot leave it at the suggestion (which in our case would be impractical) that we should try to persuade Anytus. We might find an analogon; perhaps how we might try to persuade some man who is nasty to be less nasty. We all have opportunities for that from time to time. But this is not enough. We[60] cannot answer this question which Klein raises without knowing first how[61] Socrates's last word affect[s] Meno. Since nothing is said about it, we must discuss the possibility: How is Socrates's last word likely to have affected Meno? We must take the drama, the deed, somewhat more seriously than Klein has done in this particular case. What shall Meno do if virtue is available to men only through divine allotment? The first possibility is that Meno is a divine man. There may have been quite a few women around who said: You are a divine man. He will actually act rightly without being guided by any other human being. But the mere fact of Socrates's final advice would seem to show that this is not the case, that he is in need of guidance by other human beings and hence that he is not a divine man. And I believe that even those who are Meno fans among you [laughter] last time there was some revolt . . . All right, but then we can say he is still young and he wishes to become a divine man. Is then there no way of influencing the gods' choice by piety, i.e., by worshipping the gods in the manner hallowed by custom? Such a thing was mentioned in the passage on recollection (you remember?), that in order to be reborn as a great statesman, one must live now in the most holy or pious manner. This would imply that piety or holiness as the way toward virtue is not itself virtue. But Socrates suggests in no way that Meno should lead a pious life, as we have seen throughout the dialogue. Perhaps he sees[62] that this would be a waste of time, to propose it to him.

Now in the myth told by Protagoras in the *Protagoras*, virtue is presented as a gift of Zeus, the gift of the highest god, but as a gift to all men. In the *Meno* however, at the end or toward the end, virtue is presented as a divine gift to some men. So here we have to raise the question, and which of course applies in particular to Meno: What shall the non-privileged men, in particular Meno, do? They lack the divine gift and there is no way for them to get it, at least in the present incarnation. What should they do? Now we must say Socrates does not provide for them at all, and by this very fact we could say he confirms Meno in his vice. He[63] doesn't show him any way [toward virtue]. He makes Meno doubt the only authorities which he recognized earlier, the authority of Gorgias and that of the

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[xiii] Strauss's translation. In the Loeb: "Virtue comes to us by a divine dispensation, when it does come."

[xiv] Klein, 256.

gentlemen, Athenian or Thessalian. And one could therefore say that Socrates corrupts Meno, and,[64] [which makes it] worse, in the presence of Anytus. And so Anytus can later say: I was myself present when this happened.

But we must go somewhat more deeply into the matter. What could the non-privileged, i.e., the large majority of men do? Now in the first place, they could imitate the divine men. They could imitate them. Say, Themistocles is a divine man; that you somehow know. He has his gift, a sleep-walker's gift of always proposing the wise thing for Athens. You vote for Themistocles's proposals and imitate him in other respects. The non-privileged are related to the divine men like the slaves are to the freemen: [they are] subject to them.[65] Does the virtue of slaves consist in imitating their masters? They would be very bad slaves if they were to do that. The good slave is the slave who obeys his master, not [the one] who imitates him. So the non-privileged ought to obey the divine men. That would make sense. But this raises one simple difficulty. How will the non-privileged men recognize the privileged ones? This is discussed by Plato in the *Statesman*, where this answer is given (and Aristotle repeats this in the later books of the *Politics*): it would be an easy thing if the divine men or the great men were recognizable by their bodily builds, so that they would look like statues of gods—you know, beautiful and so on—then anyone could recognize them. But since this is not necessarily the case that they can be recognized by sight, by mere sight without any judgment, then this will not work. Surely Socrates does not even allude to the non-privileged man and to their becoming virtuous or tolerable either by imitating or obeying the divine man. Is Socrates by any chance entirely indifferent to the fate of the large majority of men?

Now let us remind ourselves again of this massive fact: that everything he says in this dialogue is said with a view to Meno. Perhaps he regards Meno as Meno as incapable of either imitating or obeying the divine man, as incorrigible. Now what is to be done to incorrigible men, according to Socrates or Plato?

Mr. Lyons: They are to be executed.

LS: Exterminated, to use a very brutal but easily intelligible word. Yes. Meno is fit only for extermination. Socrates silently condemns him to death. Now something of this kind is done by Xenophon in his account of Meno's death at the end of the[66] second book of the *Anabasis*, when he describes the end of the Greek generals, you know after they had lost the battle at Cunaxa.[xv] And Meno [the arch-villain] had[67] betrayed his Greek friends, his fellow nationals, to the barbarians—a most black act of treachery. And the Persian king, being a man of unusual nobility, had Meno executed in a particularly gruesome and painful manner. The others were executed at once, in ordinary executions, but Meno was buried alive or something of this kind, and lived in that stage for a whole year. So the Persian king [w]as a master of punitive justice. Unfortunately, Xenophon adds, when he gives this account, the word: "It is said to be," i.e., that is a kind of wish of nice people that this should have happened to Meno. Unfortunately, it is to be presumed that treachery which is beneficial to a Persian king will be rewarded by the Persian king. That

[xv] *Anabasis* 2. 6.21 ff.

is the way of the world; and therefore the execution can only take place in speech, as it does in a way take place here.

Yet, to bring up another point, there is a twofold silence of Socrates. First, simple silence, which doesn't say anything; and then a silent deed, which does say something. Socrates makes Meno better for the time being by deed. If Meno could stay in with Socrates and not go to the king of Persia, or to the king's rebellious brother Cyrus, there might be some hope for him. Or perhaps if he were to reflect on what happened to him in this conversation with Socrates, [there would be hope for him]. Yes?

Student: I wonder whether this isn't too far-fetched, but in regards to Socrates's perhaps desire to have Meno exterminated—

LS: No, that we have to go through this—this is one possibility we have to consider.

Same Student: Well, it seems in one sense Socrates is trying to put Meno in a situation, the exact same situation which caused Socrates himself to be exterminated, namely, trying to persuade Anytus of something that is directly against Anytus's own beliefs. It was precisely Socrates being put in this situation and trying to persuade Anytus of something that might have led to Anytus's accusation.

LS: Yes,[68] in a broader way that is surely part of the story, that the man who deserves execution is not executed, and the man who did not deserve execution is executed. Did you mean that?

Same Student: I meant that Socrates is asking Meno to[69] go into the same state that brought about Socrates's own—

LS: I see.[70] And Meno definitely prefers self-preservation, and self-preservation if radically understood means, of course, as Hobbes in his wisdom has told us, to use every possible means to preserve dear life, whether you are guilty of [a crime punishable by] death or not. You know that is Hobbes's teaching, that a man who is legally and justly condemned to death and tries to break out of jail, killing the guards and killing any innocent bystanders who might prevent his escape, acts with the greatest natural right, for self-preservation is the principle of life. And therefore, since great wealth, gold and silver, which can be had at the Persian court, are means of self-preservation—if of comfortable self-preservation, which is also still self-preservation—Meno does belong to the other camp. But still we see the possibility in the back[ground] that he agrees with Socrates and abandons his resistance without any visible low motives, cunning on his part, [and] that he is somewhat better than Anytus.

Now let me add only one more point. *Meno* is the dialogue on virtue with an arch-villain. But Meno was not the only arch-villain. Critias was also an arch-villain: one of the thirty tyrants. But Critias did not betray the Greeks to the Persian king, one could say. And above all, Critias was reputed to be an intimate of Socrates, whereas Meno is a Thessalian and not reputed to be an intimate of Socrates. On the contrary, Meno is a

friend of Anytus, and therefore that is a great reason for singling him out, you see. This is the company which Anytus keeps, not Socrates. And in Anytus's presence it is discussed whether virtue is teachable, and the answer given is: No. As a consequence, Meno wonders whether there are any virtuous men; and this means in the context of the whole, i.e., also that part [of the dialogue] which Anytus did not hear: Virtue is knowledge; but is there knowledge, is there virtue? It means the questioning of the possibility of virtue is a vindication of villainy which takes place partly in the presence of Anytus, and of the whole earlier story which was probably narrated by Meno to Anytus. So we have here also a part of the prehistory of Socrates's accusation later, and how fitting that is, that Meno and Anytus are brought together.

Now this much about the question of what Meno could have learned from Socrates's last word. But we must also consider, as Klein rightly says, what we can learn from Socrates's last word. And that we will do, I hope, next time. If you have any questions, perhaps you'll jot them down and give them to me at the beginning of the next meeting.

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[1] Deleted "But the…."
[2] Deleted "…on."
[3] Deleted "one of the most impor…."
[4] Deleted "was raised."
[5] Deleted "this is the..and."
[6] Deleted "the core…or."
[7] Deleted "(97d.) Meno does…Yeah."
[8] Deleted "That is very far…."
[9] Deleted "on the…."
[10] Deleted "on the…."
[11] Deleted "Socrates…."
[12] Deleted "also now…."
[13] Deleted "Is this again…."
[14] Deleted "he can't…that."
[15] Deleted "that this.'
[16] Deleted "this…."
[17] Deleted "first."
[18] Deleted "No excuse me, the second passage."
[19] Deleted "first passage…why the."
[20] Deleted "is higher than right opinion…First knowledge."
[21] Deleted "sermons."
[22] Deleted "of…."
[23] Deleted "But."
[24] Deleted "text, the."
[25] Deleted "And this seems to be difficult and."
[26] Deleted "It does not come…."
[27] Deleted "If there are virtuous men…No."
[28] Deleted "it is…."
[29] Deleted "…from the."
[30] Changed from "Now let us…Perhaps it…some things can be understood in retrospect."
[31] Deleted "he."
[32] Deleted "as well as."
[33] Changed from "Correct opinion means to be…is based on being…at least in the case of the statesman, on being inspired divinely.
[34] Deleted "would mean…it was something… you had to rule out chance because it."
[35] Deleted "if…it."
[36] Deleted "There is some…He foreshadowed that."

[37] Deleted “such people.”
[38] Deleted “that”
[39] Deleted “say…I would.”
[40] Deleted “calls what comes to men by nature….”
[41] Deleted “Of course, I mean, so it.”
[42] Deleted “is…which.”
[43] Deleted “n’t.”
[44] Deleted “that I can’t do it. The daimonic thing in me opposes this proposal.” And then they laugh about that. No, I’m sorry. Socrates says first”
[45] Deleted “love of…by the.”
[46] Changed from “Is that…In the *Crito* he mentions a voice, his own god which told him never to…would always tell him when not to do something.”
[47] Deleted “,…”
LS: No, no…So that we…”If we…Yes, all right. Wait, I cannot…
L: At the moment?…“…
[48] Deleted “teach his son to be a states—”
[49] Deleted “And this of course, this man would….”
[50] Deleted “quotes here….”
[51] Deleted “what does….”
[52] Deleted “knowledge might be…that.”
[53] Deleted “get resigned to their vice…to their defect of virtue.”
[54] Deleted “And.”
[55] Deleted “some.”
[56] Deleted “Now we can now overlook the action of the dialogue.”
[57] Deleted “overlook”
[58] Deleted “on.”
[59] Changed from “Surely that is a clear thing; we cannot leave it at the suggestion which in our case would be impractical, that we should try to persuade Anytus. We might find another one perhaps or we could try to persuade some man who is nasty to be less nasty…less nasty; we all have opportunities for that from time to time.”
[60] Deleted “must…apart from...We.”
[61] Deleted “does.”
[62] Deleted “this much that this.”
[63] Deleted “says what…He.”
[64] Deleted “which makes it.”
[65] Deleted “Now...but…if we…the virtue of slaves con….”
[66] Deleted “third book or.”
[67] Deleted “betrayed…he was” Moved “the arch-villain.” Deleted “he had.”
[68] Deleted “no..that is surely part…I mean.”
[69] Deleted “sort of.”
[70] Deleted “Yeah. Yes, and there is…”

Session 13: no date

Leo Strauss: [in progress] — [I remind you of Klein's comment about it. "What follows is a quick and yet strangely involved][i] summary of almost all that has been said after, and even before, Anytus had appeared on the scene."[ii] We have read this last time. The last few pages, we may say, summarizing Klein's position, are particularly crude. Now why does Socrates do that? Is he in a hurry? But he always has the grace, even if he should be in a hurry—for example, when he gave his *Apology*, where he had a limited time—to have a proper ending. After having shown that knowledge is superior to correct opinion, he restores correct opinion to the dignity of knowledge. That was in 98b to c. Then he shows that neither knowledge nor correct opinion accrue to men by nature; nor are they acquired, meaning by human effort. He repeats the argument showing that virtue cannot be knowledge or prudence since it is not teachable, and it is not teachable since there are no teachers of virtue; and hence that virtue can be based only on correct opinion, and therefore that virtue accrues to men only through divine allotment. Yet he reminds us then again at the very end, so to speak, of the superiority of knowledge to correct opinion. After having restated that virtue accrues to men through divine allotment and not through learning, he warns us that this result has been reached by the disregard of the question: What then is virtue? Still, the last clearly audible word, audible to everyone and therefore in particular to Meno, is: Virtue goes together with correct opinion. And the first question we had to raise was: How does this affect Meno? What conclusion regarding his own life can he draw from that?

The difficulty can be stated most simply as follows: Virtue is the preserve of the men elected by the gods, of the divine men, the privileged men. But since we have no right to assume that Meno is a privileged man, what about the non-privileged men? Is their situation hopeless? Must one permit them to run into their ruin, their complete ruin, or should they imitate the privileged men?[1] Should they obey the privileged men? [Socrates gives] no answer. The question is not even raised. But in a way we do get an answer, for the conversation concludes with Socrates giving Meno a piece of advice. He tells Meno what he could do in order to benefit the Athenians, and that means in ordinary understanding what virtuous action he could[2] [perform]. He tells him which virtuous action he could perform although Meno has not learned what virtue is. But[3] Meno has become persuaded by Socrates of certain things, and above all because he has been tamed and thus made better by Socrates. Grave implications are [contained] in these statements, that men by becoming tamer should become better; there are many critics in modern times of domesticated man, tame man, in contradistinction to the beautiful, savage, untamed [man]. But it is still intelligible that a man who is gentle is, in peacetime at least, preferable to a man who is savage and cruel.

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[i] The tape begins here. However, since the preceding is a direct quotation from Klein, we can be fairly sure of its accuracy. I retain the "I remind you of Klein's comment about it" for the sake of context; the lecture should not begin with an unannounced quotation from Klein.
[ii] Klein, 250.

Now in this way, by giving this advice, and only in this way does Socrates answer the question: What shall the non-privileged men, the men who are not divine men, do? How should they live? Answer: they should do what they are told to do by virtuous men. So we are back to the suggestion we made before, that non-privileged men have no choice but to obey the privileged men. But this is too general[4] and doesn't give us more specific suggestions. Well, the difficulty is also, in other words, this: How will they recognize superior men? A general answer to the question what shall they do?, which is not so vaguely general: They should listen to the wise. [But this injunction], in order to be effective at the same time, would have to be a law. That is a statement which everyone can understand, and if there is too much fine print there are lawyers around who will give us guidance.[5] [But] Socrates cannot be the legislator for Meno, obviously not, not even for Anytus. This we should keep in mind for the sequel. You had a point?

Student: Earlier in the dialogue . . .

LS: By all means.[6] [But] what does piety mean here? How far would it be a guidance? Now what would it mean precisely, so that a not very deep man can act on it? To worship the gods in the customary manner, is that it?

Same Student: Yeah, it wouldn't then have the Jewish sense of also obeying a set of laws vis à vis—

LS:[7] Well, piety for the Greeks means primarily worshiping the gods in the customary manner. And then the question arises: What is the relation of the gods to justice? And assuming that the gods are concerned with justice and would punish the unjust, will they punish the unjust? And in particular, a question discussed at some length in the *Republic*, for example: Cannot sacrificing and prayers be used for bribing the gods, so that a man can live rather unjustly and still make his deal, as it were, with the gods? This leads to a long set of other questions, but it cannot be disregarded.[8] That is connected with what you said about the situation in Judaism, not quite identical among the Greeks, and that is that worship the gods in the customary manner. Custom is of course law; and what is that law? Primarily the law of the *polis*, i.e., in Sparta the gods are worshiped differently than in Athens, and different gods are worshiped. So there, law would come in. I therefore think the formula which I suggested, the law, is more comprehensive. Good. So we have given a provisional answer to the question of what[9] Meno [could] learn from the discussion, especially from the end, and now we have to raise the question as to what we can learn, hoping that we are different from Meno.

Everything said is said with a view to Meno, and therefore things which do not fit into that perspective are omitted[10], disregarded. Now what does Socrates disregard when speaking to Meno, and what must we consider if we are to arrive at a better understanding than Meno has acquired? Now the first point: Justice going together with correct opinion is a second best to virtue going together or being identical with prudence or knowledge. There are then two kinds of virtue. This seems to be the most obvious lesson of the dialogue. Now this result reminds us of the beginning of the *Meno*, namely,

of Meno's first answer to Socrates's question, when he enumerated *n* kinds of virtue, because the difference between two and *n* is only quantitative. And Socrates, we recall, insisted on a single answer. A single answer. Meno was especially concerned with the difference between the virtues of free men and of slaves, but Socrates said: I want to have a single virtue. This demand of Socrates is, however, ambiguous, as we have noted before. In the first place, it might mean we should abstract from the great variety of human beings, in particular of their natures, and therefore of the variety of virtues corresponding to that variety of natures. But Socrates could also have meant that the single virtue which he wants is the virtue *par excellence*, the virtue of the best kind of human beings, so that the other kinds of virtue would be defective forms of the virtue *par excellence*. Now we have seen that Meno's second and third answers to the question prove to be not applicable to the virtue of slaves or children, and this would be an indication of what a virtue par excellence would be.

Now by reaching the result that virtue going together with prudence, or knowledge, is different from virtue going together with correct opinion, we find that Meno's first answer, the[re are] many virtues, has been vindicated to some extent. Socrates denies and asserts that virtue going together with prudence or knowledge is possible. But it must be possible; otherwise the latter kind, the second-rate virtue, would not be recognizable as such in a clear manner by anyone. Socrates denies the possibility of the true kind of virtue because it is not possible—this kind of virtue is not possible for Meno. Let us look at 89b.

Mr. Lyons: "No, for then—

LS: Will you tell them which page?

Mr. Lyons: Page 333.[iii]

> [SOC.] No, for then, I presume, we should have this result: if men good by nature,[iv] we surely—

LS: No, "if men became good by nature."

Mr. Lyons:

> if men became good by nature,[v] we surely should have had men able to discern who of the young were good by nature, and on their pointing them out we should have taken them over and kept them safe in the citadel, having set our mark on them far rather than on our gold treasure, in order that none might have corrupted[vi] them, and that when they came to be of age, they might be useful to their city[vii]." (89b1-7)

[iii] In the transcript, the interpolation: "The third remark of Socrates." This is not heard on the tape.
[iv] In original: "if good men were so by nature"
[v] In original: "If good men were so by nature."
[vi] In original: "tampered with." Strauss had corrected the translation when it was first read.
[vii] In original: "country."

LS: Ya, let us stop here.[11] When we read this passage, we observed at that time that Socrates and Meno, according to Socrates's statement here, would not be the ones who would recognize the natures. They would only keep them, preserve them. That reminds us of the *Republic*. Let us disregard Socrates for the time being, because Socrates [12]may not believe that he belongs to the same class of men as Meno does. Meno could only be a soldier in the perfect city; guided by Socrates and coerced to some extent by him, or at least by his fellow soldiers, he would be a tolerable human being. We shall keep this in mind for a discussion which comes very soon. Yet we must not forget the possibility that the denial of the possibility of virtue in the highest sense could have a general meaning. Perhaps no man possesses knowledge in the highest sense of the term. In the *Phaedo*,[13] Socrates calls the objective of the philosopher, the end of the philosophers, *phronēsis*, prudence. The philosophers spend their lives in the love [of] or striving for prudence, so that no one possesses prudence, even. And the basis of that would be that the line separating prudence from knowledge is difficult to draw, and the reasoning underlying that is not difficult to state, because prudence needs principles by which we guide our prudent actions, and these principles[14] have to be known, have to be truly known; and this would then be a theoretical knowledge. In this case, however, one could say [that] men cannot do anything but spending their life—in the highest case—spending their life in striving for knowledge, in learning, in progress toward better knowledge.

The second point I wish to make is this: Socrates switches back and forth between the virtue of the statesman and the virtue of man in general. What about the average man, the altogether non-privileged man, who is after all still a human being? Socrates disregards them. Does he not care for them?[15] From the *Republic* we could get the impression that he is relatively unconcerned with them. But nevertheless, there must be a virtue [16]of the ordinary man. This question we must remind [ourselves of]. And how is it acquired? That would be the question. The virtue of the privileged men, we have seen, is acquired by divine allotment, and[17] the highest virtue, if at all possible, is acquired by learning. But how is the virtue of the average man acquired?[18] Well, paternal admonitions, not necessarily unaccompanied by spankings in childhood, and various other things, [for] example. But ultimately, by obeying the *nomos*, the law, men acquire that measure of virtue which they have. And now we make this observation which is in need of being checked, but as far as I can see is correct. The very term *nomos*, and [the] adjectives and verbs[19] derivative from it, are absent from the *Meno*. The *Meno* is silent on the *nomos* in an unusual way. I mean, [it is] very different from the other dialogues. The *Meno* literally abstracts from *nomos*.[20] One can give a superficial explanation for that, which is good enough for those who are satisfied with it: Meno himself could not possibly be restrained by *nomos*. That is clear. But this doesn't go deep enough.

Now why does the *Meno* abstract from the *nomos*? What is the *nomos*? There is a Platonic dialogue devoted to this subject, the *Minos*, generally regarded as spurious but even if spurious in need of being studied, because there were some men who[21] were much closer to Plato than anyone living today who thought [that] it was a work of Plato. And as far as I can see there is no reason to deny that it is a work of Plato, except it has some funny features and it is not very inspiring at first glance. But Plato can also be uninspiring, if required. But there are some coincidences with Plato's *Laws*, which

everyone regards as genuine, so we can say [that] the *nomos* is a decision of the *polis*. The legislator[22] is the *polis*, however organized. Now such a law, a decision of the *polis*, is of course not necessarily good or wise, and its goodness or wisdom depends very much on the quality of the legislator, whether he or they are good and wise. Yet the law has under all circumstances, whether it is good or bad, coercive power: the whole power of the organized community is behind it. But its validity requires something more than coercion, because coercion alone is easily resented and leads to disobedience. I read to you a passage from Aristotle's *Politics*, book 2, 1269a20 to 23, a passage which could be confirmed by Platonic passages, but it is here more neatly expressed. "The law has no strength whatever to being obeyed independently of habit, custom. And this does not come about except in a long time." "In a long time." Therefore, that is the context, law should not be easily changed or frequently changed. Laws have a sanction apart from the coercion in their oldness, in their being traditional. And what is given to us by tradition is given to us by our memory. But the same is of course also true of correct opinion: the correct opinions which guide us are the remembered sayings of knowing men.

Now this leads to a more serious difficulty of which we have spoken before and on the basis of Klein's interpretation. I put this equation, or nonequation, on the blackboard again. [LS writes on the blackboard] Virtue, knowledge, let us say, and recollection. Vice, opinion, memory. You remember that; I drew it on the blackboard on an earlier occasion.[23] If this is true, if you turn it around now so that what is based on memory only—as distinguished from insight—is akin to vice, that means that all kinds of virtue except the highest have the same principle as Meno's arch-villainy. And that is confirmed by a passage to which I have referred more than once, toward the end of the *Republic*, 619c6 to d1, where Socrates describes a man who has lived well during this life in a well-ordered city, having had virtue only through habituation but not through insight, [and who] chooses after his life (when he has to choose another one) the life of a tyrant, because his heart, we can say, was not purified because it lacked insight. So that Meno and all non-philosophers—and a philosopher, if I may mention this in passing, [in] the Platonic sense does not mean a student or professor of philosophy; I mean, these are just professions like that of a janitor or a biologist or anything else, that is irrelevant. So all non-philosophers are in the same boat with Meno, and there is of course a specific difference between Meno and, say, what we call a nice man who has no connection with philosophy. In the case of Meno and his like the vice becomes fully visible while they are still alive, whereas in the case of the so-called decent man—and we are all so-called decent men in the eyes of Plato; our vice does not necessarily become visible while we are alive but only when we are in that solitude in which we make[24] [our] decision for the next life.

In order to understand this very paradoxical thesis, I would like to mention only one point which is not usually stated with the proper clarity and simplicity. When we use the word virtue traditionally, up to the present day, we mean by virtue primarily moral virtue: *ēthikē aretē, virtus moralis*. This is a term coined by Aristotle. It does not exist in the writings of Plato. For Plato there is the simple, [25]radical distinction between genuine virtue, which is not separable from the quest for knowledge, and vulgar virtue or political virtue, which has to do very much with law and the influence of law. I have developed

this at somewhat greater length[26] in my study *The City and Man*, pages 25 to 26, which I do not wish to repeat here. Now one can raise and must raise this question: Is this not a very important difference, whether a man's vice becomes visible while he is still alive or not? Some people would say that is the only difference of importance. Differently stated: Is the virtue of which non-philosophers are capable, subphilosophic virtue, merely remembrance of things told? Are we not very unjust in making such a statement? Is subphilosophic virtue altogether second hand? Look at the many truly nice people you know; or to make it somewhat less private, read one of the wonderful stories of Jane Austen, in which she presents to us such very charming, genuinely charming human beings, especially girls. So is this all sham? That wouldn't make sense. Does this not imply [or] include in all cases some genuine understanding or insight? Plato likes the term "divining." We all divine much more than we clearly see. Do not all human beings divine something of virtue, although this divination may be almost extinct in the case of many? He also speaks of the love of the beautiful, which in Greek means not only the love of the visibly beautiful, like a beautiful rose, but also of the morally beautiful, if I may say so, of the noble. There is some perception, sense perception, of the beautiful. We speak of sensitivity—it is interesting that this is still connected with sense, sense perception. [Or] taste, which is even more [unambiguously derived from] one of our senses. For example, many human beings who have no possibility whatever to raise the philosophic questions are open to the solemn, elevated, stately in poetry, in music, [in] sculpture, in contradistinction to the arts understood as the releasing of urges, i.e., having fun.[27] You know this kind of aesthetics, surely, from the daily papers. Now and people who are open to that in poetry, music, sculpture, and so on, are primarily of course open to these things in human beings. Otherwise, that [type of art] wouldn't be of any worth [to them].

Now such divining underlies all laws, all authoritative opinions. These laws and authoritative opinions—that is the core of what now is called a culture or a civilization—differ "quote historically unquote," meaning from epoch to epoch and from nation to nation. Yet they all have in common—despite their immense variety and the immense differences of rank—they all have in common the same kind of origin. And this origin is not, as it would be since the nineteenth century, something like the *Volk* mind, either openly stated or in a disguised form, but the founders: outstanding individuals. That was the assumption, implicit and explicit, of the classical thinkers. We should not be too surprised about it when we think of the world religions especially; they do not present themselves as being the products of any *Volk* mind, but if we disregard the divine source, they all have outstanding founders, individuals. Now they all have the same kind of origin in another sense of the term origin, namely, in the truth. As Plato would put it, they all divined the ideas to different degrees. They all divined fragments of the truth. To this extent, they are all genuine. They become merely convention only by the act of absolutization: this is the whole truth beyond which you cannot ask questions.

Now the conclusion of all this would be that virtue as understood by the non-philosophers at all times [and] in all places is something belonging to the element of opinion, which can never be more than that: as it were, a divination which has been frozen. But once one is aware of this state of things, one is beyond it in a manner,[28] [at least one] can be. Either

one is a so-called cynic, and then one is a despicable human being, or one is on his way toward knowledge. But can knowledge ever be reached, full knowledge?[29] That is for Plato surely a question. Yet is not the quest for knowledge the most solid support for virtue? But if[30] knowledge can never be reached, one will never come beyond an opinion which one cannot help accepting as the best one is able to reach. The darknesses will remain. But if this should be so, is this very insight, the knowledge of our ignorance, not *the* truth, meaning the highest point which we can reach? These are some of the[31] questions which the reader of the *Meno* cannot help raising at the end of the dialogue, and with special regard to the last passage of the dialogue. Now is there any point anyone would like to bring up? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Are you planning to go on later about the problem of our possible insight of ultimate ignorance?

LS: I beg your pardon.

Mr. Butterworth: Will you treat the question later about the possible insight that we may have of ultimate ignorance?

LS: Well, I try to learn as much as I can from the *Meno* at this time. And this leads us to this question. What I implicitly did now—I do not know whether all of you were aware of it—is to show that there is a certain point where Plato agrees with a certain form of "quote skepticism" which is very powerful today. Nietzsche has said, in an exaggerating[32] but enlightening statement: what distinguishes us,[33] educated [Western] men of the late nineteenth century, from all earlier generation[s], is that we do not possess the truth. In other words, the highest point when we are serious is that we reach this point, which means of course that we are very much concerned with the truth; otherwise the statement doesn't have any meaning. Now this is in strange agreement [with the argument of the *Meno*]; one could say Nietzsche has taken it over from his reading of Socrates or Plato. And now frequently in the form of the historical consciousness, which is not the Platonic form in any way, this caution is a very powerful thing in our world, and I believe it is very important to make clear to oneself that what is meant is to a considerable extent simply a recovering of what Socrates of old said. There are also important differences, but we must see how much there is in Socrates which is immediately for us, with some effort of course, and in this sense . . . enlightening about our fundamental concerns.

Mr. Butterworth: The thing I was trying to drive at by my question was that at different points in the course you have raised the issue of the possibility that we may be only striving for knowledge, but that it may not be possible to obtain it.

LS: [34]Yes, that is indeed the key point of Socrates, who claimed that he knows that he does not know. But this must be understood intelligently. The first part of the statement is as important as the last part: "I *know* that I do not know." And we have read the statement in the *Meno*—there are very few things which[35] he is prepared to defend under all conditions. But a few there are. One cannot know that one does not know without

knowing.[36] It is impossible for any human being to live without knowledge, be it only very dim and almost dormant. That is after all the most obvious meaning of the doctrine of recollection. We all have the truth within us in a dormant state. We have a fundamental awareness. I will speak of that later.

Now I would like then to go on in my discussion. Now if we look at the surface of the *Meno*, what everybody could see at a first reading in a state of[37] [near]-drowsiness: the question is raised as to what is virtue, and the question is not answered. While there is an answer, of course it is correct opinion due to [its] accruing through divine allotment, yet this is qualified again at the end. We have to reconsider the whole thing. You remember. Now we would like to have an answer to this question—although in a sense we have an answer. We are quite capable[38] [of] distinguish[ing] between more or less virtuous people, and the simple example of Meno's good deed at the end shows that we have some understanding that if Meno were trying to persuade Anytus to behave properly toward Socrates, that would be a good deed. And we could also give many examples of good deeds nearer home. So we do have some knowledge.

But we would like to have an explicit Platonic, or let us say Socratic answer. Where do we find Socrates's answer to the question regarding virtue? Do I hear any answer? It's not a farfetched and difficult question. Every one of you or most of you know that: the *Republic*. That would be the simplest answer, but not quite; for the question which is answered in the *Republic* is not the question, What is virtue? But, What is justice? And of justice, we have learned in this dialogue, it is not virtue but a kind of virtue, some virtue, one virtue among many. And in the[39] the first book of the *Republic*, just as in the *Meno*, three answers to the question as to what justice is are discussed and refuted. But while Socrates refutes these answers he leads up to the proof that justice is something good. But as he makes clear at the end of book 1, he has "proven" (in quotation marks) that justice is good without knowing what justice is. Thereupon Glaucon and Adeimantus restate the case against justice in order to force Socrates to prove the goodness of justice in a serious manner, because what[40] Socrates had done in book 1 was not a serious defense of justice. Glaucon and Adeimantus attack justice; that is one of the most well-known parts of the Platonic work—and here, incidentally, we see the difference between these noble youths and Meno. An unjust man like Meno will not attack justice. You know, when Socrates brings up justice, he immediately says: Of course, of course; I forgot it at the moment but I didn't mean to. Because an unjust man prefers that others remain the dupes of the belief in justice so that they will become *his* dupes; and therefore that would be a kind of proof that he is a crook, the fact that Meno never says: How do I know that justice is good, as Glaucon and Adeimantus do? Yes?

Student: Not quite that. When we prove that someone who does attack justice is not unjust, it doesn't necessarily prove the other way.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: [41][The fact that Meno doesn't attack justice] doesn't quite prove that [he] is a crook, because that would mean that anybody who hasn't ever questioned justice is a criminal in the same sense. It proves it the other way.

LS: No.[42] Only a just man, I said, can attack justice. An unjust man has an interest. He has emancipated himself from these[43] traditional bonds. Why should he wish to emancipate others from them? He can benefit from the folly and stupidity of the others.

Same Student: But while it is true that only a just man will attack justice, is it also true that every just man will attack justice?

LS: No, that is true. But I said only a just man; I didn't say all just men.

Same Student: Therefore the fact that he doesn't attack justice does not prove that he is an unjust man.

LS: No, if only a just man attacks justice, then the fact that Meno does not attack justice—I see, that's true. It would be compatible. There could be a just man who simply says it has a bad effect on weak brethren, and therefore would not do that. Out of a sense of public responsibility, he would abstain from it. But you must admit that makes it ever more unlikely that this would be Meno's motive. But I would like to discuss this question, which has come up more than once, of what kind of fellow is Meno. Is he the arch-villain? We will take it up; we will not avoid that. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: What about Thrasymachus in that case?

LS: Ya, but Thrasymachus is not an unjust man. Thrasymachus is—how shall I say?—he plays something. He plays something. He is a teacher of rhetoric, rhetoric of a special kind, a teacher of a particularly emotional rhetoric, as Aristotle tells you, and he plays an act. That Socrates does not bring it out, that he presents him like a savage beast which has tried to tear him and Glaucon to pieces, does not completely settle the issue. But that would lead me too far. Good.

Now Socrates is then commissioned by Glaucon-Adeimantus to prove the goodness of justice. And Socrates proposes then that they should look at justice writ large, meaning justice in the *polis*, because in the individual it is so tiny a thing [that] we[44] might not be able to see it, but the *polis* is big and there we could see it. Now this is of course a joke. The serious [point] is this: that justice is the social virtue and the complete society is the city; and therefore we can see justice only in the city, at least best in the city. But they do not engage in an empirical study of the cities in order to find out what justice is, but construct the best city in speech. Why? Well, because in an imperfect city, the justice possible under it would be imperfect. Take a simple case. Let us assume that slavery is unjust, and that in a given society slavery is established. Then a man like Socrates would be compelled to denounce a fugitive slave to the master, or else he would transgress the law. He would have to do what is just according to law and not just according to nature. But even if he would be willing to break the law in this particular case or any other case

of this kind, there would still be this terrible situation that he is torn between two different principles of justice, and that is not the desirable case for justice.

Now Socrates implies in his whole procedure in the *Republic* that no actual city is just or will ever be just, and therefore they must construct it in speech. They must found a just city in speech. This formation takes place in three stages, as most of you will remember: the so-called city of pigs; the city of the armed camp, which is characterized by communism regarding property, women, and children, and equality of the two sexes; and the third stage, including of course the two preceding ones, is the *kallipolis*, the city of beauty, which has the rule of philosophers on the top of communism and the equality of the two sexes. Now before the rule of the philosophers has come up at all and even before a sufficiently detailed discussion of communism and equality of the two sexes [has taken place], the question as to what justice is is answered, but in a very strange way. Now this passage, I think, we should consider. That is all in the fourth book. I do not expect you to have the *Republic* here. Now wait a second; let me find it. *Republic* 4, 427c6. Now, here.

Mr. Lyons: "At last, then, son of Ariston, said I—"

LS: That is Glaucon, ya.

Mr. Lyons:

> your city may be considered as established. The next thing is to procure a sufficient light somewhere and to look yourself, and call in the aid of your brother and of Polemarchus and the rest, if we may in any wise discover where justice and injustice should be in it, wherein they differ from one another and which of the two he must have who is to be happy, alike whether his condition is known or not known to all gods and men."[viii]

LS: [45]So in other words, this is now finished, the perfect city is now founded; and now let us look at justice in it. Socrates adds the point: also injustice in it—which is important for a deeper understanding with which we are now not concerned, namely: Is there not injustice even in the best city? Is this not inevitable? Why could this be, incidentally? Well, you remember the division into classes; and this division is made, or is preferably to be made when they are babies. And an error is possible, so that someone born to be a blacksmith might have been sent into the upper class and vice versa, which would be something unjust. He has been assigned the job for which he is not by nature fit. And there would be other cases, similar and perhaps graver cases. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> "Nonsense," said Glaucon, "you promised that you would carry on the search yourself, admitting that it would be impious for you not to come to the aid of justice by every means in your power." "A true reminder," I said, "and I must do so, but you also must lend a hand." "Well," he said, "we will." "I expect then,"

[viii] *Republic* 427c6-d7, trans. Paul Shorey (Loeb Classical Library edition) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930).

> said I, that we shall find it in this way. I think our city, if it has been rightly founded, is good in the full sense of the word." (427c6-e8)

LS: Ya, "Is perfectly good."

Mr. Lyons:

> "Necessarily," he said. "Clearly, then, it will be wise, brave, sober, and just." "Clearly." "Then if we find any of these qualities in it, the remainder will be that which we have not found." "Surely." "Take the case of any four other things. If we were looking for any one of them in anything and recognized the object of our search first, that would have been enough for us, but if we had recognized the other three first, that in itself would have made known to us the thing we were seeking. For plainly there was nothing left for it to be but to be the remainder." "Right," he said. "And so, since these are four, we must conduct the search in the same way." "Clearly." "And, moreover— (427e9-428a10)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now the perfect city possesses all virtues, naturally; otherwise it wouldn't be perfect, i.e., it possesses all virtues and not only justice. But Socrates does something strange. He knows there is justice in it, and the others too. Why does he not look in the first place for justice? He proposes that they should discuss first the three other virtues. He doesn't say why. After all, we are supposed to be interested above all in justice. He discusses first wisdom, and that means the habit of giving good advice and being well advised. So it is very closely akin to prudence, and it is also called some kind of knowledge, just [as] in the *Meno*. Now let us read on, at the[46] last speech in 428e. Where did we find wisdom in the city?[47]

Mr. Lyons:

> "Then it is by virtue of its smallest class and minutest part of itself, and the wisdom that resides therein, in the part which takes the lead and rules, that a city established on principles of nature would be wise as a whole. And as it appears these are by nature the fewest, the class to which it pertains to partake of the knowledge which alone of all forms of knowledge deserves the name of wisdom."

LS: So the whole *polis* is wise by virtue of the smallest tribe and part of it; if that smallest tribe and part, the governors, are wise, then the city is wise. Yes. And will you go on where you left off?

Mr. Lyons:

> "Most true," he said. "This one of the four, then, we have, I know not how, discovered, the thing itself and its place in the state." "I certainly think," said he, "that it has been discovered sufficiently." (428e-429a7)

LS: Yes. Now you see Socrates is not quite as sure that it has been discovered sufficiently as Glaucon is. Then they turn to the next virtue they investigate, and that is courage or manliness. The whole city is manly or courageous by the manliness or courage of a part, namely, of the warriors. Whether the women are courageous or not, for

example, is utterly irrelevant for that purpose—not here, naturally, as I correct myself immediately, because of the equality of the sexes. But at any rate, only the warriors and their courage is decisive. Yes, now let us go on. Let us skip on a bit to 429b8: "And hence a city will be courageous by."

Mr. Lyons: I have it right here. Shall I read?

LS: Ya.

Mr. Lyons:

> "Bravery too, then, belongs to a city by virtue of a part of itself owing to its possession in that part of a quality that under all conditions will preserve the conviction that things to be feared are precisely those which and such as the lawgiver inculcated in their education."

LS: "Conviction" is in Greek *doxa*, opinion, and it should be kept. Yes?

Mr. Lyons: "Is not that what you call bravery?" "I don't altogether understand what you said, he replied. But say—"

LS: To say [that] courage is the preservation of the opinion regarding fear inspiring things is not an answer which would offer itself immediately at first hearing as sound. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> but say it again." "A kind of conservation," I said, "is what I mean by bravery." "What sort of conservation?" "The conservation of the conviction which the law has created by education about fearful things—what and what sort of things are to be feared. And by the phrase 'under all conditions' I mean that the brave man preserves it both in pain and pleasures and in desires and fears and does not expel it from his soul." (428b7-d1)

LS: Now let us stop here. So courage, the next virtue discussed, is the preservation of an opinion—not merely the opinion, having the opinion, for example, that death is not to be feared, but persevering when it is not easy to despise death. When we are in nice company and we've had perhaps some liquor, then death might seem to be very far off. But when we are[48] in Vietnam, for example, it would be much harder, with or without liquor, to[49] preserve this opinion. And this perseverance in the opinion, that is courage. Yes. And you see that is brought about by the law through education, meaning the law prescribes the forms of education, but the education must be gone through. Think of the part of education given in an army, the training, which is of course also education; and that it is prescribed by the law would not make a man a better soldier if he doesn't actually undergo the training. Good. And now let us skip a bit in 430b, the end of the speech of Socrates.

Mr. Lyons: "This power?"

LS: "This kind of power." Ya.

Mr. Lyons:

> "This kind of power in the soul, then, this unfailing conservation of right and lawful belief about things to be and not to be feared is what I call and would assume to be courage, unless you have something—"

LS: Ya. Here it is more clearly stated. The preservation of correct opinion, correct and lawful opinion, meaning law-inspired, law-dictated opinion, [is what Socrates is calling courage]. Here we have again the correct opinion of which we have heard so much in the *Meno*. Yes?[50] Go on.

Mr. Lyons:

> "unless you have something different to say." "No, nothing, said he; "for I presume that you consider mere right opinion about the same matters not produced by education, that which may manifest itself in a beast or a slave, to have little or nothing to do with law and that you would call it by another name than courage." (430b2-9)

LS: So in other words, here Glaucon proposes a distinction within the sphere of correct opinions. Someone may have correct opinions regarding fearful things on the basis of education. That's the right thing, and he may have it without it, like a brutish fellow,[51] [but] he also has correct opinion according to Glaucon. And yet it would not be the right kind of thing. Yes. So there are various kinds of correct opinions.[52] Go on where you left off.

Mr. Lyons:

> "That is most true," said I. "Well then," he said, "I accept this as bravery," "Do so," said I, "and you will be right with the reservation that it is the courage of the citizen. Some other time, if it please you, we will discuss it more fully."

LS: Ya, stop here. So they have made clear what courage is. But the courage which they have found out is political courage, the courage of the citizen, and the implication is that [this] is a lower kind of courage than the highest kind, which would deserve to be called courage in the full sense of the term. Yes. We have to read a few more passages.[53] [Continue] where you left off.

Mr. Lyons:

> "At present we were not seeking this but justice; and for the purpose of that inquiry I believe we have done enough." (430c1-6)

LS: In other words, for this narrow, limited purpose it is sufficient, but it's of course not [a] [54]sufficient answer to the question of what courage or manliness is. Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> "You are quite right," he said. "Two things still remain," said I, "to make out in our city, soberness—"

LS: That is what I translate by "moderation."

Mr. Lyons:

> "moderation and the object of the whole inquiry, justice." "Quite so." "If there were only some way to discover justice so that we need not further concern ourselves about moderation[ix]." "Well—"

LS: This is what Socrates says.[55] [He] change[s] his mind now, it seems, as [to] why should we discuss [the other virtues]. Originally he was the one who said we must make the roundabout way through the three other virtues. And now Socrates has become tired, as it were, and says: Let us forget about moderation. But how does Glaucon respond?

Mr. Lyons:

> "Well, I, for my part," he said, "neither know of any such way nor would I wish justice to be discovered first if that means that we are not to go on to the consideration of moderation. But if you desire to please me, consider this before that." "It would certainly be very wrong of me not to desire it," said I. (430c7-e1)

LS: So in other words, in order to do Glaucon a favor, Socrates is willing to discuss moderation. We will skip that, but let me only say in general that what was said explicitly about courage is not said explicitly about wisdom and moderation, namely, that wisdom and moderation as here defined are only crudely defined for political purposes and not truly. Now finally, what is the answer to the question of what justice is, which after all is the theme? Now in 432b at the beginning: Three of the things we have seen in the *polis*.

Mr. Lyons:

> "What can be the remaining form that would give the city still another virtue?"

LS: Ya.

Mr. Lyons:

> "For it is obvious that the remainder is justice." "Obvious." "Now then, Glaucon, is the time for us like huntsmen to surround the covert and keep close watch that justice may not slip through and get away from us and vanish from our sight. It plainly must be somewhere hereabouts. Keep your eyes open then and do your best to descry it. You may see it before I do and point it out to me." (432b3-c2)

LS: That is an indication, a very ironical indication, of the reason why justice is studied last.[56] On the basis of the whole discussion of the *Republic*, justice is most difficult of access and therefore it is taken up last. But now let us skip and go over to 433a, and this is the last one we do.

[ix] In original: "soberness," but Mr. Lyons is following Strauss's cues, as he does throughout.

Mr. Lyons: "Listen then, said I—"

LS: Ya.

Mr. Lyons:

> "Listen then," said I, "and learn if there is anything in what I say. For what we laid down in the beginning as a universal requirement when we were founding our city, this I think, or some form of this, is justice. And what we did lay down, and often said, if you recall, was that each one man must perform one social service in the state for which his nature was best adapted." "Yes, we said that." "And again that to do one's own business and not to be a busybody is justice, is a saying that we have heard from many and very often repeated ourselves." "We have." "This, then," I said, "my friend, if taken in a certain sense appears to be justice, this principle of doing one's own business." (433a1-b4)

LS: Let us stop here. That is the definition of justice at which we have arrived after this long labor, not only of the few pages at which we have looked but the whole preceding four books. Justice is minding one's own business, as it is usually rendered. So that is—how is that Horatian verse? "The mountains give birth and a little mouse is born." *Pariunt montes nascitur ridiculus mus*. A ridiculous mouse, ya? Good. But you see here the qualifications that are made when he said in 433a, in the first place: "this or a kind of it is justice."[x] Minding one's business or a kind of minding one's business? It becomes darker and darker. And here in the second passage, which is the last one we read: this, "if it comes into being or happens in a certain manner."[xi] But we are not told in which manner. Now it is not too difficult to guess, especially with the help of a remark of Aristotle near the beginning of his *Ethics to say* what is lacking here, to make the definition at least tolerably complete, namely, to[57] do one's business well. Take a shoemaker, a shoemaker who doesn't interfere with saddlers, tailors, schoolteachers, and is a nice fellow enough. But if he is lazy and inept, he is of course not a good shoemaker. I mean, he is in this sense a bad citizen, because he was trained by us in order to be a good shoemaker. So that is a minimum addition we have to make.

The point which I wanted to make is only that[58] the *Republic*, to which we would naturally turn from the *Meno* in order to satisfy our appetite whetted by the *Meno*, [59]also leaves us in a state of thirst, although it helps a bit. Now[60] a word about the sequel in the *Republic*.[61] Socrates turns then to finding justice in the single human being, i.e., in contradistinction to the collective, to the city. And now the whole work done in this part would be of no use if the individual, or rather his soul, did not also consist of three parts, just as the city consists [of three parts]. There must be three kinds of nature in the soul, and therefore it becomes naturally necessary to engage in a study of the soul. And then this study, conducted with the necessary speed and with the necessary agreements of Glaucon, perhaps also at sometimes in the wrong place, leads to the result that there are three kinds of natures in the soul, just as there are three kinds in the city, namely, the

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[x] In original: "this I think, or some form of this, is justice." Strauss did not correct Mr. Lyons when he read this passage, or that appearing in the following note, aloud.

[xi] This is Strauss's rendering of 433b3-4. The Loeb reads "if taken in a certain sense."

rulers, the soldiers, and the laborers. There is the mind;[62] spiritedness, as it is called there, anger; and desire, desire understood as the lowest, the mass of desires which are as despicable from this point of view as the so-called masses. And then it is all right. So we have a doctrine: we could find out the full truth about justice only by studying the soul. The *polis* was not enough. But without the guidance of the *polis* we could not have seen it in the soul, because the *polis* provided us with that guide—you know, there must be three natures.

And then at the end of the *Republic*, in book 10 we learn already in book 4, that in order to make this quite clear a longer way, a much longer way in the study of the soul would be needed in order to establish sufficiently what the virtues are. Naturally we understand by virtues certain characteristics of the soul, the perfections of the soul. How can we know these perfections properly if we do not know the soul in the first place? Superficial knowledge is not negligible and we must rest satisfied with it most of the time, but it is of course not a good enough solution. But at the end of the *Republic* we see again, it is emphasized again that the solution given throughout the *Republic* of the whole problem of justice is as questionable as the solution we found at the beginning of the first book, and for the same reason. Just as the solution in the first book proved to be unsatisfactory because we answered the question as to whether justice is good without knowing what justice is, so in the *Republic* as a whole we have answered the question of what justice is but without sufficient a knowledge of the soul, of the nature of the soul, and therefore further learning, further study, further inquiry is indispensable. This much regarding the *Republic*. You wanted to say something?

Student: I thought that in the *Republic*[63] the longer way refers [more explicitly] to knowledge of the good than of the—

LS: That is one way of putting it. You can say that, but what does "the good" mean? I mean, that would be a fair question, would it not?

Same Student: Well, in other words, is the question: Insufficient knowledge of the good equal to insufficient knowledge of the soul, or are they—?

LS: Yes, in a way. One can say that because[64]—well, very simply, you cannot rest satisfied at the three parts of the soul discussed in book 4, desire, spiritedness, and *logistikon*, as it is called there, the faculty of reckoning or of figuring out.[65] You remember the divided line? So there you have a division into four of the cognitive parts of the soul, with disregard of the emotional part like the science . . . So you would probably have, that is to say, at least six parts. Then you would have to go beyond that. But this would not be sufficient; we have also to consider very carefully the relation of the understanding . . . sense perception, and its objects, because otherwise we cannot understand the cognitive acts of the mind. And then what is the answer to the question of the relation between cognition and its objects in the *Republic*? Must there not be a common ground for the cognition as well for its objects, if there is to be knowledge? And what is the name of the common ground? The good. Just as the sun is the common ground for visible things, and our seeing them can easily be established experimentally;

in full darkness we cannot see and things are not visible. Just as the sun is the identical ground for the visibility of things and our seeing, the idea of the good is the common ground for our seeing with the mind's eye those things which[66] can be seen only with the mind's eye; and just as the sun is the cause for the very being of the visible things—think of plants, which need the sun in order to grow—so the ideas, the objects of the mind, cannot be without causation by the good, by the idea of the good. So that is an absolutely correct answer, which you gave. Without the knowledge of the good our knowledge is imperfect; that is stated very clearly in the seventh book. But what does Plato mean by the knowledge of the good? That is then a great question. And I only indicated very, very superficially a connection. Good. Now—Mr. Bruell.

Mr. Bruell: When you stated how justice was treated in the *Meno*, you said that it was not considered to be virtue, but some virtue. But[67] could one also say that in a certain part of the *Meno* there is even a question raised about whether it's a virtue at all, because each of the things of the soul has to be accompanied by *phronēsis*, or by prudence, or use directed by prudence, otherwise it may not be beneficial and therefore it may not be virtue?

LS: The other virtues, you mean?

Mr. Bruell: And justice, because justice—

LS: And justice especially, sure. Yes.

Mr. Bruell: Doesn't this have some—well, I just wondered if you could say something—

LS: [68]Yes, that was explicitly said; there is no doubt about it. *Phronēsis* must be the high if our actions are to be truly just, or truly moderate, or whatever.

Mr. Bruell: Would it be right to say, then, following this, that[69] part of the question what is justice would be the question whether it's a virtue or not?

LS: Whether it is a virtue? Yes, you can also say that, but you have to ask this; the question has to be put in this manner. There must be an excess beyond *phronēsis*[70] if we are to be good. And this excess is ordinarily split up, and not without reason, into various virtues such as justice, courage, and so on. This would be the *Meno*, we would have to say. *Phronēsis* does not exhaust the whole thing. There are, as it were, the fields of its application. Why do we distinguish between a temperate action and a courageous action if these are not different virtues? At least maybe if we go to the depths of the thing where all become inseparable from each other, as Aristotle puts it. Inseparable. But they are still distinguishable, and the fact that they are distinguishable from each other proves also that they are distinguishable from *phrōnesis*. That doesn't mean that they are separable. And perhaps this is what Plato also means. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: That remark you just made I think is related to a comment which Klein makes to the effect that in a sense *phronēsis* or prudence can't be split up into parts, but I wonder how—

LS: Yes.

Mr. Burnam: Well, but in a sense it can, can't it? In the sense that you just mentioned, for one thing, that it has different fields of application; and also, I mean apart from the fields you mentioned, also prudence in household matters as opposed to prudence in intellectual matters or matters of state, or something like that—

LS: Well, but could you not say this? Surely there are people who are prudent, say, in banking,[71] and others who have no possibility to act prudently because they simply do not know enough, have no practice. But[72] will the prudent man who has no experience in banking not also act prudently in regard to banking? I would say yes, he would be fully aware of his ignorance and would not act in that field except under the guidance of a man who knows, who[m he][73] has reasons to believe, at least, that they are prudent in that sphere, and in addition that they are benevolent to him, because if not, they might be very good at banking and very bad for him as bankers. But to come back [to the point], why is it necessary that prudence be a whole? This is not based on any explicit Platonic statement in Klein, as you will probably see, and Klein simply [74]refers to Aristotle's *Ethics when he speaks of prudence,* which is something infinitely better than to refer to a modern philosopher, but is not without dangers because maybe the difference between Plato and Aristotle precisely has to do with the relation of *phronēsis* and *epistemē*, of prudence and of knowledge. But in one sense, up to a certain point one must admit it, for what is prudence about? According to the *Meno*, without going into any subtlety, what is prudence about? I mean,[75] what is the comprehensive name for the end which prudence pursues?

Student: Usefulness, how to make something useful.

LS: There are so many useful things. That is not a single end.

Student: Good things.

LS: Same—collective, not a single thing. Yes?

Student: Happiness?

LS: Yes. It occurs, I believe, a single time in the dialogue, the positive word *eudaimonia*. But that's it. All other knowledges which we have are concerned with partial goods: the shoemaker with protecting our feet. Well, what other arts are there? The carpenter with making it convenient for us to sit and to read, for example. Yes. And so I leave the further enumeration to you. There is one, only one, kind of knowledge which is concerned with our whole good, and that means primarily with each one of us, and you can easily see there will be questions of priority coming up, especially among those[76]

whose means are limited, and whose means are unlimited. So all men are fundamentally in the same boat. Questions of priority arise: What is more important, to get the shoes or to get the table, or whatever thing you might take? And what is the point of reference? Your overall good, your happiness; and therefore, since this is one end, therefore the knowledge directed toward it must be one. Unless you were to say happiness is always incomplete, but then it would mean [that] there can never be *phronēsis*—prudence is unable to procure happiness, and then we would have to reconsider the whole thing and would have to wonder how to become happy. But in a crude sense of the word, which is still intelligible, we imply that the man whom we admire or respect would be the man who under his own powers becomes happy and own his own guidance; he can guide himself well. And in this sense, prudence can be said to be a whole.

But the question of course arises here, which I think Klein does not discuss although he is of course familiar with it, [that] happiness has many meanings. As we have seen, what is happiness for Meno is not happiness for Socrates and many others, and therefore it becomes necessary to know, to distinguish true happiness from the various forms of false happiness.[77] And this is bound up with inquiries about the nature of man or the nature of the soul, the human soul. And if this is so, we have to go beyond *phronēsis*, have to find its basis, very strangely, in knowledge in science[78]. But this seems to be very bad because we have become doubtful [as to] whether such a science can be reached, whether it is not always imperfect. And yet, do we not need a clear orientation for our life with a view to our happiness? Must therefore not *phronēsis* be independent of *epistēmē,* of theoretical knowledge? This question surely must be faced. Good. So we have to leave it at this. Next time we will give a general study of the *Meno* and begin with a discussion of parts of Klein's digression.

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[1] Deleted "Should they obey the privileged men?"
[2] Deleted "do."
[3] Deleted "because virtue…."
[4] Deleted "too general."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "By all means. And that would mean of course…But that leads to…What does piety then mean?"
[7] Deleted "Yeah, but that is…."
[8] Changed from '.But generally speaking one can also…just as one can…that is connected with what you said about the situation in Judaism, but not quite identical among the Greeks, and that is that…worship the gods in the customary manner; custom is of course law."
[9] Moved "could."
[10] Deleted "are."
[11] Deleted "So we have….'
[12] Deleted "may not mean it so"
[13] Deleted "Plato…or."
[14] Deleted "need…have to be known."
[15] Deleted "There is some…."
[16] Deleted "for"
[17] Deleted "the virtue…."
[18] Changed from "Well, if we …paternal admonitions, not necessarily unaccompanied by spankings in childhood, and various other things—example."
[19] Deleted "connecting…."
[20] Deleted "Well and."
[21] Deleted "knew…."
[22] Deleted "…the legislator."

[23] Changed from "This would mean that all kinds of…if this is true, if you turn it around now, that what is based on memory only, as distinguished from insight, is akin to vice, that means that all kinds of virtue except the highest have the same principle as Meno's arch-villainy."
[24] Deleted "this."
[25] Deleted "the"
[26] Deleted "…but with greater…at somewhat greater length."
[27] Deleted "if I may…."
[28] Deleted "One is, or."
[29] Deleted "Yet."
[30] Deleted "virtue…."
[31] Deleted "points…of the."
[32] Deleted "statement but…."
[33] Deleted "many." Moved "Western." Deleted "men…."
[34] Deleted "Yeah, but what does…."
[35] Deleted "he would…which."
[36] Deleted "And this knowledge…."
[37] Deleted "almost."
[38] Deleted "to."
[39] Deleted "*Republic* just as in the *Meno*, in."
[40] Deleted "he had done in Book I, what."
[41] Changed from "It doesn't quite prove that Meno is a crook because he doesn't attack justice because that would mean that anybody who hasn't ever questioned justice is a criminal in the same sense."
[42] Deleted "That."
[43] Deleted "bonds, these."
[44] Deleted "could not…."
[45] Deleted "So in other words this is now finished, the perfect city is now founded, and now let us look at justice in it."
[46] Deleted "end of 428…."
[47] Deleted "The end of…yeah, here."
[48] Deleted "directly…When we are."
[49] Deleted "have this…to."
[50] Deleted "Go…Yeah…."
[51] Deleted "who doesn't even..and that is…and."
[52] Deleted "And one more…next…."
[53] Deleted "Yes."
[54] Deleted "answer to the question…no."
[55] Deleted "would."
[56] Moved "It is most."
[57] Deleted ""'mond…to do one's business well…or to."
[58] Deleted "in"
[59] Deleted "is"
[60] Deleted "in the sequel…."
[61] Deleted "He turns…."
[62] Deleted "the.'
[63] Deleted "that explicitly."
[64] Deleted "one cannot know…Very simply."
[65] Deleted "And therefore you have…."
[66] Deleted "are…."
[67] Deleted "that…."
[68] Changed from "Yes that is of course…That was explicitly said; there is no doubt about it. There must…Justice…*Phronēsis* must be the high if our actions are to be truly just. Or truly moderate, or whatever."
[69] Deleted "the…."
[70] Deleted "beyond phronēsis."
[71] Deleted "yeah."
[72] Deleted "still is the prudent man…will he not…."

[73] Deleted "has…who."
[74] Deleted "identifies"
[75] Deleted "there is…prudence…."
[76] Deleted "who are…."
[77] Changed from "Now…And this is bound up with inquiries about the nature of man or the nature of the soul, the human soul."
[78] Deleted "in science." Changed from "And that…but this seems to be very bad because we have become doubtful whether such a science can be reached, whether it is not always be imperfect."

Session 14: no date[1]

Leo Strauss: What I would like to do is to discuss the digressions in Klein's commentary, but we cannot discuss the whole for reasons which will appear later. But I must properly prepare that. To say for the *n*th time, the *Meno* is *the* dialogue devoted to the question of what is virtue. What is the *eidos* of virtue, the idea of virtue, that which makes virtue virtue, that which is presupposed and implicated in every kind of virtue and in every case of virtuous action? Whenever you do a good deed, you presuppose, without necessarily knowing it or being aware of it, some understanding of goodness. The *Meno* suggests, but only suggests, that virtue is knowledge; and at the same time, it casts doubt on the possibility of knowledge. This seems to be peculiar to this dialogue. More precisely, in the first part, Socrates refutes Meno's three answers. Meno is led into a paralysis, *aporia*; he presents his lazy *logos,* which is [meant] to justify his inability to answer this question. Socrates opposes it by his holy *logos*, the story of our recollection, and stating here that learning is not impossible, as the lazy *logos* says, but learning is possible, and above all, by learning we become better; and that means, naturally, by having learned we are good. And that would seem, in a formula: virtue is knowledge. But in the second part of the dialogue it is said that virtue is knowledge if there are teachers of virtue, but there are no teachers of virtue; hence virtue cannot be knowledge, and virtue can only be true or correct opinion which accrues to men by divine allotment.

Stated differently, more simply: virtue is opinion. The Greek word for opinion, *doxa*, has the ambiguity: it can also mean reputation. And then, that virtue should be reputation is not so difficult to understand as [the view that] virtue is opinion. Some of you may remember what John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* says about the three kinds of morality. I do not remember it exactly, therefore I don't want to quote it. Is there anyone who has read it in the last week or so? [Student chuckles] No.[2] Well, there are three moralities: one, of the law—the Hobbist view of morality; and one is the religious view; and there is a third one, the morality of the philosophers, and he uses the term reputation, or terms of this kind.[i] I'm sorry I do not know it exactly.[3]

But to come back now. Now these two parts of the *Meno* of which I have reminded you reveal a strange parallelism. In the first part it is said learning is not possible, but recollection is possible; and in the second part it is said learning of virtue is not possible, but virtue may accrue by divine allotment. The *Meno* presents then, in a manner, a twofold treatment of the same theme. That theme is virtue and, more particularly, the relation of virtue and knowledge. The *Meno* suggests that virtue is knowledge, and it raises the question as to whether virtue as knowledge is possible. In the first part, the question is answered in the affirmative; in the second part, the question is answered in the negative.[4] In the first part, in other words, it is shown [that] knowledge is possible; in the second part, [that] knowledge is not possible. I'm speaking now entirely of the surface,

[i] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), book 2, chapter 28.7ff. Locke states that men judge their actions according to three different laws: divine law; civil law; and the law of opinion or reputation.

but the surface is as much a part of the work as its greatest profundities and abysses. How to overcome this contradiction? Well, in the old way: we must make a distinction. Is virtue, in the sense of knowledge, possible for all men or only for some? And then we would understand that a sweeping statement is not possible. We must make this distinction.

In the first part, as is shown especially by the slave scene, knowledge is shown to be possible for all, for it is shown to be possible even for a slave. In the second part, virtue as knowledge is possible for none. But here a distinction is made, or forced upon us, between the divine men, the privileged men, and the non-privileged; and this distinction reflects the more common and more important distinction between those who are by nature philosophers and those who are not. In the first part of the *Meno* it is said [that] nothing is teachable but everything, so to say, is recollectable. There is no teaching but only recollection. In the second part, virtue is not teachable, for there are no teachers of virtue; we can only have correct opinion due to divine allotment. The thesis in accordance with this, [is] that recollection is as it were replaced by the divine allotment. The recollection thesis is retracted in 87b8, which we must re-read.

Mr. Lyons: In the first place—

LS: Ya, begin there.

Mr. Lyons:

> In the same way with regard to our question about virtue, since we do not know either what it is or what kind of thing it may be, we had best make use of a hypothesis in considering whether it can be taught or not, as thus: what kind of thing must virtue be in the class of mental properties, so as to be teachable or not? In the first place, if is it something dissimilar or similar to knowledge, is it teachable or not—or, as we were saying just now, rememberable?

LS: "Recollectable."

Mr. Lyons: "Let us have no disputing about the choice of a name." (87b2-c1)

LS: You see, in other words, this is a mere verbal difference, and the teaching regarding recollection is in this way dropped. But we have seen that virtue only as correct opinion is impossible. There must be somewhere, behind correct opinion, knowledge; otherwise correct opinion would not be recognizable as such. And the statement which we find at the end, [visible] on the surface—virtue is possible only on the basis of correct opinion—is said only with a view to Meno, who cannot learn and therefore cannot understand truly the higher kind of knowledge. So the overall lesson of the *Meno* would then seem to be that virtue as connected with knowledge, not yet identical with knowledge, is possible. Virtue is knowledge, as Socrates is known to have said frequently. But what does this mean? In the first place, as is made clear throughout the dialogue, virtue would not be knowledge period, but some kind of knowledge, *epistēmē tis*. And, we can add, the right kind of knowledge, the highest kind, because we all know of many kinds of knowledge of

which one could not see any connection they would have with virtue. Now what is that highest kind? Let us read two other passages, 75c8.

Mr. Lyons: Page 281.

LS: 75c8. Yes. All right, begin there.

Mr. Lyons:

> The truth from me; and if my questioner were a professor of the eristic and contentious sort, I should say to him: I have made my statement; if it is wrong, your business is to examine and refute it. But if, like you and me on this occasion, we were friends and chose to have a discussion together, I should have to reply in some milder tone more suited to dialectic.

LS: "In more dialectical manner." Yes?

Mr. Lyons:

> The more dialectical manner, I suppose, is not merely to answer what is true, but also to make use of those points which the questioned person acknowledges he knows. (75c8-d7)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So this is one hint as to what the highest kind of knowledge is: dialectics, here in contradistinction to eristics. The eristician is a man who wishes to win the argument. The dialectician has no such desire to win—that is the Platonic meaning of dialectic; he is gentle and he is accommodating, not only to answer the truth but also through such things of which the questioned individual grants that he knows them.[5] He considers what the other man agrees and admits. This is one indication. The other we find somewhat later; we do not have to read that. You remember the two kinds of definitions of color which we are given. The one[6] which Meno preferred was called tragic. But Socrates preferred the other.

Now we can say here, especially on the basis of Klein's commentary, that dialectics is somehow understood in contradistinction to mathematics and all other sciences, including physics. The knowledge in question is not technical knowledge, even if we take our bearings by the highest of all *technai*. It is not specialized knowledge, but comprehensive. Comprehensive means concerned with the whole and not with any part of the whole, however important, whereas the arts deal all with partial good things, the practical arts—health and so on. There must be some art of arts which deals with the whole human good and which is therefore able to set the questions of priorities between the claims of the various special arts: and the whole human good is happiness. The highest knowledge is the knowledge which transforms the whole man or brings about such transformation by making men concerned with the whole (this is developed at some length in the *Republic*, but it is always implied[7]), and therefore its object is true happiness in contradistinction to the various kinds of imaginary happiness. But not all men are capable of this concern with the whole; not all men are capable of becoming philosophers. There is therefore a need for a second-rate virtue, for a second-hand virtue, and this will be based on

unexamined opinions. You remember the statement of Socrates in the *Apology* against the unexamined life, the lives which most human beings lead: their lives are based on unexamined opinions. All our lives are that to a lesser or greater extent, [based] on memory. So we arrive then at this distinction so powerfully stated by Klein between memory and recollection as the nerve of the *Meno*.

We know memory from experience, but what does recollection mean, especially if it is given such an unusual meaning? What phenomenon does it indicate? I will try to answer this provisionally. Now what Plato presupposes [is] one thing which is by no means universally granted but which has been granted by many people apart from Plato, and therefore[8] you will have heard of that. There is a thing in the world called empiricism, which, if you take it literally, says [that] all our knowledge stems from experience,[9] which means primarily from sense experience. There is British empiricism; you have doubtless heard of this phenomenon. Now the objection which was made to it was this, quoting the old adage going back to Aristotle: there is nothing in the intellect which has not been previously in the senses. So our conceit of a dog is based on a variety of sense experiences of dogs and so on. But the objection was this. There is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses except the intellect itself. Such a little thing as the principle of contradiction, for example, cannot have been derived from sense experience, because experience can only tell us strictly speaking what has hitherto been observed; and hitherto it has been observed that men do contradict each other and themselves, and sometimes without suffering any harm from it. On the contrary, sometimes they even are greatly helped by it if they do it in a judicious manner. So experience will not tell us anything. The principle of contradiction says that every infraction of this principle, whenever it is made, at any time in the past or in the future, in China or in California or any points in between, will be an untenable proposition. So something of this kind we must consider when we try to understand Plato's doctrine of recollection. All experience is preceded by a fundamental awareness which makes experience possible. For experience, [to] say: this is not a dog, [or] it is a table but not a dog, is not possible without the principle of contradiction. Ya? How can you maintain that, if someone says: No, it is a dog. Then the principle of contradiction would be invoked sooner or later.

Now all experience is preceded by a fundamental awareness which makes experience possible. That fundamental awareness is dormant, potential. How many people who have never heard of the principle of contradiction see a contradiction when it faces them?[10] When someone says: I have not stolen this thing, and then, [as in the shoplifting case we have now in California][ii], the same individual says the next day: I did commit it, but I was sick. Still, even people who have never heard of the principle of contradiction see that this individual contradicts herself, and therefore draw some conclusions from that. So the fundamental awareness is dormant, potential, and its actualization requires an external stimulus. But this is only the stimulus; it does not produce that awareness. The human soul has by nature, by being a human soul, the truth within itself. There is a natural harmony between the human mind and everything that is, between the human mind and the whole. This is a much more general statement of what Plato means by recollection.

[ii] Strauss could be referring to the case of the actress Hedy Lamarr, who was arrested for shoplifting in a May Company store in California in January, 1966.

Now in the words of Aristotle, the soul is in a manner all the things. He means by that the human soul, because the human soul is in principle able to grasp everything, or in other words, there are no assignable limits to what the human intellect can grasp. The human intellect is able by its nature to grasp all things as they are or, to use a simple[11] expression, the human intellect is by nature able to know the truth. Truth according to this view is the apt equation of the intellect to the thing. If what we have in mind about a thing agrees with the thing, then we have the truth. For example, say we are concerned with, say, language. We have some conceits as to what language is, some opinions, and what we are striving after is to make our opinion, what is in our mind, agree with the thing, in this case with language. And once we have achieved this, then we can say we know the truth. The distinction between cats and dogs, for example, is a distinction which the intellect discovers but does not make.[12] Common sense at all times has of course agreed with that, but this does not quite settle the question. What is of human origin, what is man-made here is only the words "cat" and "dog," which you can translate by *chien*,[iii] or by *cane*,[iv] or whatever else you [wish],[13] and they are of course infinitely variable from one language to another. But they are therefore only the words. The thing, the cat, is not affected, and the difference between cat and dog is not in itself dependent on human making. Man has a kinship with the whole, that is to say with the ground of the whole, with what makes the whole the whole. The ground of the whole makes intelligible the place which man occupies within the whole. The singular dignity of man, the fact that man is a singularly privileged being and at the same time not the highest being, for his privileged position is not his work but given to him, this we can say was the basis of classical philosophy, and not only classical philosophy because it is of course also the view of the Bible. God created man, and that means in the context only man, in his image. When Aristotle says that the highest ground—god—is the *nous*, the intellect, man is at least the only earthly being capable of intellecting.

Now this was not the only view about these high matters stated in classical antiquity. There was an alternative one, which is most accessible to us in atomism, and in particular in Epicureanism, because it so happened that out of the Epicurean school there came a great poet called Lucretius, and this poem has done very much to immortalize atomism throughout the Western tradition.[v] According to that view the grounds of everything are the atoms and the void. They explain why man has come into being, why in the infinitely many worlds which have come into being or will come into being, successively and simultaneously, there will always be man. Epicurean cosmology, by the way, is as geocentric as Aristotle's or Plato's. Man's being a part of the whole is necessary, just as it is in Plato and Aristotle and the Bible. But in what sense? The atoms and the void do not bring forth man in order to become known, so that there be a being which can know the atoms and the void. They do not bring forth anything in order to achieve a result. While it is taken for granted by the Epicureans or the atomists that the human intellect can understand everything, at least in principle, because the atoms and the void are the ground of everything, there is no kinship between the human mind and the atoms. And[14]

[iii] French for "dog."
[iv] Italian for "dog."
[v] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*.

Lucretius makes this very simply clear by calling the atoms, the invisible atoms, *caeca*, which in Latin means in the first place "blind," but he means more than invisible. He wants to bring out the radical difference between the ground of grounds and man, and especially what he esteems most highly in man: the intellect. The seeing intellect has no kinship whatever, as seeing, with the ground of grounds.

Now these things have become in a way trivial because of modern science, which is of course not Epicurean in any way but which this so-called corpuscular philosophy, as it was called in the seventeenth century, became one of the major strands entering into it. Let us consider for one moment what the proposition is with which we are today most familiar, that of modern natural science. According to[15] [modern science] it is at least possible that man exists only on this planet. Most of the time and in most places the world lacks man, without being on this ground any less a world—in fact, *the* world. Man's being is altogether an accident, which it was not quite in the Epicurean doctrine. Now modern science is originally the same as modern philosophy. One must therefore consider the criticism of classical philosophy by modern philosophy, and especially the criticism of the classical view according to which there is a natural harmony between the human mind and the whole. I tell a long story by cutting it to its bare bones, but I believe it is not misleading, what I say. This view is rejected in 1600 or so, as well as 1966. This is now rejected as a good-natured or wishful assumption. You would like that, wouldn't you? The argument can be restated as follows, at its highest level: the whole might be the work of an evil demon bent on deceiving us. That would be a nice harmony between our mind and the whole. Or, as Descartes says—who has of course coined this evil demon story—the world may be the work of an evil demon bent on deceiving us; or, which is the same thing, the whole might be the work of blind necessity utterly indifferent as to itself or its products ever becoming known. It so happened that some beings came into being out of other living beings and they, in a very long development of millions of years, stumbled on the notion that such a thing as science might be possible. There is rather a natural disharmony between the human mind and the whole. Bacon is a good source, in the *Novum Organum*, for this view, but the same is underlying Descartes as well. Now what can knowledge be under that condition? Knowledge is the result of the human attempt to make the whole intelligible, to transform the whole through intellectual tools, through concepts which are the free creation of the human intellect, and this is the only source of intelligibility.

I present to you the argument against Plato and the other classical philosophers in another way. Truth was traditionally understood as the adequation of the intellect to the thing. Now it is asked: Does this not presuppose that the things are not affected or changed by becoming known? Here is the thing, the aim, the target. [LS writes on the blackboard] Now it is presupposed here of course that by knowing it, that remains unchanged, because otherwise it would be a wholly Sisyphean process. If our knowing it would modify[16] [it], then we have to begin from scratch, so to speak, and do it over; and we could never . . . It is then presupposed that the things are not affected or changed by becoming known. But how can we know this? We would have to be able to compare the thing prior to its becoming known with the thing as known,[17] which is plainly absurd because the thing prior to being known is by definition not known. Now this reasoning

does not prove that our knowledge affects the things; it merely proves that we cannot know whether our knowledge affects them. We cannot know whether the distinction of the things, the order of the things (dogs, cats), meaning, with one word, is of human origin or not.

Now in order to settle this question, which you would naturally wish to do, one would have to dig infinitely more deeply than we are able to do. Let me say now only this much. The latest form which modern thought has taken on, on a high level, the form which owes its being to the German philosopher Heidegger, is characterized by the assertion that the ground of grounds is not something sempiternal or eternal, like Plato's ideas, Aristotle's cosmos, the biblical God, or even the Epicurean atoms or the Newtonian laws of nature. There is nothing, at least nothing of any importance, that is sempiternal or eternal. And this is only the reverse side of the assertion that all thought is radically historical; and we would have to discuss this great issue, which we cannot possibly even begin to do here. I hope I can give again a seminar on Nietzsche next year in which I will take up this question. So in other words, what I did now was to remind you of the fact that there are very grave questions which we cannot settle even if we had understood the Platonic dialogues as a whole, because an alternative way of thinking has appeared in modern times which has undergone many changes. There was, as it were, a kind of mutual slaughter of the sultans. But still there is always one who survives, and we are then concerned with the latest, the present sultan, so to speak. And there are many more and other reasons for that. I thought I should at least remind you of that.

I hope I have made clear, especially what I said at the beginning of this disquisition, that what the doctrine of recollection surely implies is this natural kinship between the human intellect, the human mind, and the whole; and this is something which is very questionable on the basis of modern philosophy. So I know that I have given occasion for many more questions than for satisfaction. That was, however, my purpose. But I'm perfectly willing to devote—in the first place, I will now turn to a somewhat more hilarious subject as a kind of *divertissement*. [Laughter] But if there is anyone who would like to bring up something which is answerable by me in a short time, I will do it. Mr. Malbin?

Mr. Malbin: Before you got into . . . major step, saying that there is an implication or at least a surface implication that virtue as knowledge is impossible, to saying that the deeper implication of the dialogue is that it is possible and that it is—where in the dialogue, in this dialogue, do you get that, or how?

LS: Yes, that is a very proper question, and that I think I should be able to answer, although I cannot answer the other one. What was the end of the book?

Mr. Malbin: . . .

LS: Socrates's advice given to Meno, and Socrates has no doubt that if Meno could persuade Anytus to be more gentle, that would be good for the Athenians. There is then some knowledge here, is it not? And some knowledge relative to virtue which is available

to Socrates. This is to say nothing of what Socrates said earlier: However little I might be sure regarding recollection and immortality and this kind of thing, this I would fight for by speech and deed, by *logos* and deed, that by learning and making the effort we become better. So in other words,[18] Socrates has knowledge. Whether [it is] perfect knowledge is a long question, but he has knowledge, sufficient for all the practical purposes with which he was concerned in his life, of virtue and not merely of opinions which might be called correct—but of which one could never see why they are correct, and therefore they are indistinguishable from false opinions.

Mr. Malbin: Is there any indication in this dialogue that there are any more than those opinions, something that Socrates believes dearly, perhaps, but something that may or may not be correct? I believe in other dialogues, perhaps he states more flatly that it is knowledge, but in this one there doesn't seem to be such a statement. He simply says that "I am sure that learning will make you better"; but if knowledge is not possible then his being sure only involves his feeling or an opinion—

LS:[19] But still, you must also consider the basis of this reasoning. Why is virtue not possible, according to this? What is the proof? That virtue must be teachable and there are no teachers of virtue. And the only two kinds of people who were considered were the gentlemen and sophists. But this is of course not exhaustive; there may be another kind of teacher. Perhaps Socrates is such a teacher, who indeed would not teach by making long speeches but by conversing, by questioning.

Mr. Bruell: I understand the commonsense reason why it would be as important for us to study Heidegger as Plato, but I—

LS:[20] It would be very hard to understand Heidegger without having some understanding of Plato and of Aristotle, because it is a transformation of earlier thought, a conscious transformation, and therefore you have to know the thing transformed to some extent. You can also begin, as Heidegger frequently does, from contemporary problems and ascend, as it were, but then you come into a dimension where you will not find your way any more if you have not studied what is vulgarly called the history of philosophy. Yes?

Student: I wanted to ask just as a general question, if you could in any way state briefly the necessity for us to study, for instance, Heidegger and—

LS: Oh, you don't have to. Take anything what you have today, say, the most common form of positivism or what have you, or even not that—I mean, take the practical positivism, not of the professors of philosophy but of the physicists, biologists and so on, or social scientists, not to forget, who say that philosophy is bunk. And[21] you have to face that. I mean, after all, it is a very healthy experience to face that. I mean, it may not always be pleasant, but just as gymnastic training is not always pleasant and yet eminently salutary, it would be true of this sort of thing. And then you will be driven from the most crude and superficial statements of this view which you'll find anywhere, almost, into the more sophisticated forms. For example, you would find that certain

statements of Popper[vi] are more coherent than those of other people in that field, and then you would even find perhaps there are some people even better than Popper in that field.[22] And eventually I believe you would be driven to say (that is my guess) that the whole approach is fundamentally inadequate. And then, I think by looking around (that is not my prediction but my hope, if I may say so) you would find that Heidegger is the one who has thought through these problems more than anyone else living today, aware of the difficulties of modernity but fundamentally continuing in a deepened faith in modern tradition. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: If I understood you correctly, you said that the modern view is marked by, in part, the doctrine that our knowing the things affects the things. Then how does this tie in with Heidegger's point that there is no such thing as an eternal ground of grounds or principles?

LS: That is easy. Now let me see whether I can state it as easily as that. Well, in a schema you can put it this way. [LS writes on the blackboard] The older view, radically crudified, would say this. Here is the subject—that is of course in modern language—the subject, and here is the object. And it doesn't affect it at all. The copying doctrine. The only people today who maintain it literally, I mean apart from the Aristotelians, are the Marxists. But that is in such a crude manner, [as you see] when you read Lenin or so, anti-imperial criticism or any of the other things. Knowledge copies what is in itself.[23] Now the sophistication is this: Does not the subject's glance at the object transform the object? Well, in some spheres we all know it. There is a long literature on[24] what happens to someone who is deeply moved by love, by grief, or whatever it may be, and when he looks at it detachedly, what happens to his beloved? Ya. And so on and so on. [Laughter] I give you only the crudest example now. Does not the subject modify the object?[25] That of course underlying the Marxist view more seriously speaking, the Marxist view that knowing is a kind of exchange between man and his environment; and through this exchange the environment is changed, so that after this exchange the object will no longer be the same. And therefore there begins a process in which subject modifies object and vice versa—it doesn't make any difference where it starts—and this is a so-called dialectical process which can find its end only in a final state, in a final condition where all possible contradictions have been resolved. This is knowledge. Now what about . . .

Mr. Butterworth: . . . to see how this, which would be peculiar to the modern situation, would fit in with Heidegger also being peculiar to the modern situation and his denial of an eternal principle . . .

LS: [26]Well, of what do we know that it is eternal or sempiternal? If you disregard the demonstrations of the existence of God which are rejected by most people today, what remains? The eternity of motion? What about entropy? So that is a dark question, whether there is anything which we can, on the basis of present-day knowledge, state [that] it is eternal. Surely not the human race.

[vi] Karl Popper (1902-1994), author most famously of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), and of *The Poverty of Historicism* (1936) and *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959).

Mr. Butterworth: The world itself.

LS: The same would apply to the world. If there is such a thing as an entropy, if we can take this literally, there would be a state in which there is no longer any change possible.[27] You only have to look up Heidegger's first work, *Sein und Zeit*, and then you will see what he does, what he says about the eternity and especially about the form which the thought of eternity had taken in German idealism. There is no doubt about that. Ya. But I would say it is the first time—Heidegger was the first philosopher who has thought through what it means that no recourse to anything eternal is possible.

Mr. Butterworth: Is it necessary to come to that, though, if you start with the object being affected by the subject?

LS: [28]Sure, the famous beginning of modern philosophy, say, in Descartes's *Meditations*, is, in an infinitely sophisticated version, preserved in German idealism and in a still more sophisticated and complicated form preserved in so-called existentialism. To that extent it is true, but it would lead us too far.

Student: I'm curious about Epicureanism and how that was not an essentially modern position. This is very complicated, but if—

LS: By the way, Epicureanism restored, with considerable modification, the doctrine of Democritus and Leucippus; that is even then coeval with Socrates, if not earlier than Socrates. So it's a very old position, you know? . . .

Same Student: You said that for the Epicurean, there would always be man as part of the world.[29] And yet the ground of grounds was atoms and the void.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: I'm not quite sure what the relation between how man must be part of the world and how that—

LS: You can say they were very naive. They couldn't imagine that a world, a cosmos, some ornament, some beautiful thing is possible without human beings in it. I think our ordinary sense would tell us [that] if there is a world, say, a planet or a planetary system, without any human beings, we would also say it is a desert: even if it blooms in various ways, it would still be a desert without human beings. That's a famous anthropocentric naiveté, which we all have and of which one must investigate whether it is more than naiveté. I will give you a simple example. The modern doctrine in its original form implies[30] what Locke called [a distinction] between primary and secondary qualities.[vii] You know about that distinction? Say, blue—blue colors, [or] shrill sound. These are qualities in no way in the object but strictly subjective. The Epicureans regarded these so-called secondary qualities as objective qualities, only not primary compared with size, bulk, and the other qualities of the atoms. In other words, when these atoms clash, they

[vii] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 2, chapter 8.

bring about color, sound . . . They were in this respect much less radical than modern natural science.

Same Student: Were they aware that—of the view that the universe cannot be understood unless it is ruled by a divine intelligence?

LS: Oh God, no! Excuse me if I use God here in this . . . The Epicureans were formally not atheists, but they were surely atheists in the sense that no god has anything to do with the coming-into-being or perishing of the universe.

Same Student: But were they aware that this view is—

LS: No, they took it simply for granted. There was a lack of reflection about the status of man, and in this respect one can say [that] modern philosophy, even the higher kinds of modern materialistic philosophy, are more sophisticated than Epicureanism because they consider this question.[31] But that would lead us very, very far. But one thing is clear. When you read Epicurus, especially Lucretius, one has the impression that comes closer to modern ways of feeling than anything else in classical antiquity. But one thing you must never forget, and that is particularly important for us here: the Epicurean tradition and the Epicurean doctrine has nothing whatever to do with politics. And their brothers in the modern world[32] are very political. You know that?

Student: Yes, Hobbes.

LS: Yes, and[33] many more, a whole line; and that is of course very interesting, that in ancient times materialism was unpolitical and in modern times it was and is the basis of a very powerful political movement from the very beginning. And[34] in this respect, it is conceivable that the Epicureans were less naive than their modern followers. That's a long question, but it is surely helpful for understanding our modern world better to consider the kinship as well as the similarities between modern materialism and Epicurean doctrine. You know, people sometimes make things too simple by thinking only of Aristotle and his famous finite universe, and then the great opening, the infinite spaces in the sixteenth, seventeenth century. But the infinite spaces were[35] [also] the void of the Epicureans and the atomists. So one has to[36] consider that. Yes.

Student: You don't have to answer this if you think it will go too far, but[37] wouldn't the impossibility of deciding between the classical philosophers and the modern philosophers almost be the same as giving in to the modern philosophers?

LS: I don't understand you.

Same Student: In other words, to use a poetic analogy, if we couldn't prove that we weren't on a darkling plane where confused armies clash by night, aren't we indeed on such a plane?

LS: And what would this prove?

Same Student: That the modern view could be correct. That—

LS: [38]Well, you would have to replace your beautiful metaphor by a non-metaphorical statement, and if you mean the crisis of modern men, it would still be a question whether it is the crisis of modern man and not of man as such. Could this not also be, that once you accept certain principles which were accepted in the early seventeenth century and had a tremendous success, whether that was perhaps a wrong choice? And we are the late heirs of that. It cannot be settled as simpl[y] as that.[39] Some people of course[40] believe that the mere fact that we have now computers, to say nothing of telescopes and microscopes, settles all questions regarding the ancients and moderns, but these people are not very thoughtful, you know?[41] Because these are not simply good things, as we have learned from the *Meno*; they have to be governed by prudence to be good, and therefore—and whether we are as prudent or more prudent than premodern men, that is a very long question. A simple introduction you will find in the third part of *Gulliver's Travels* about prudence in modern science,[viii] which is of course a satire, naturally; but satires are not necessarily wholly misleading. Good.

So now I will now turn to a merrier subject in order to come more closely to a discussion of the Platonic doctrine of recollection. We find a discussion of this subject on a much lower level in Xenophon. Generally speaking, Xenophon discusses all questions on a lower level than Plato does.[42] He doesn't raise his eyes as high as Plato does, but that does not mean, as many[43] [believe], that he was stupid, a kind of retired colonel who didn't understand[44] these subtle things, and he was a good soldier all right and a very reactionary politician at the same time—you see, certain combinations seem to be eternal. [Laughter] But I am certain that Xenophon was a very intelligent man and that[45] [his presentation of] the Socratic teaching on its lower level was due to a deliberate choice, and it is the reason for the peculiar, comical character of Xenophon's writing. There is much of comedy in Plato, as you know, but there is also much of comedy in Xenophon, but a comedy of a different kind.

Now this[46] Xenophonic reference to recollection without using the word recollection occurs in the dialogue *Oeconomicus.* That is the only book which Xenophon wrote which is, so to say, a single dialogue between Socrates and a master of managing the household. You remember that great art, in which Gorgias and Protagoras were interested. But here the discussion takes place of course not with a sophist but with a practitioner of the art, a very respectable Athenian gentleman called Ischomachos, and very funny things happen which we simply don't have the time to discuss here, the funny things which are much more than funny because they contain important lessons. But I will limit myself only to one point. After[47] Ischomachos has described at Socrates's request the way of life of a gentleman, what he, Ischomachos, does from the early morning until the late evening, and where it becomes perfectly clear that Socrates is not a perfect gentleman because his

[viii] Strauss may be referring to Gulliver's visit to the island of Laputa, where the denizens are engaged in measuring, quantifying, and experimenting, to very little practical effect. Their mania for measuring, for example, led them to applying the use of quadrants to the art of tailoring, resulting only in ill-fitting clothes. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

way of life is wholly different from that, Socrates utters the desire to learn the art of Ischomachos. And this art is of course not his gentlemanship but agriculture, because he is a gentleman farmer. Now I will read to you a few passages here. So he wants to know that.

> Why Socrates [Ischomachos says], farming is not troublesome to learn, like other arts, which the pupil must study till he is worn out before he[48] can earn his keep by his work [like carpentering and so on—LS]. Some things you can understand [or learn—LS] by watching men at work [so you do not have to learn, you only watch, say, how to dig—LS], others by just being told, well enough to teach another if you wish. [If you have learned how to dig by looking at somebody digging, you can obviously easily transmit this knowledge to somebody else—LS] And I believe [Ischomachos says—LS] that you, Socrates, know a good deal about farming yourself without being aware of this knowledge.[ix]

Yes. Now I'll read to you a few more passages. I think I'll begin here.[49] Socrates has just explained how one cleans corn.

> Well, Socrates [Ischomachos says—LS] it seems you are capable of teaching the quickest way of cleaning corn.
> Socrates: I really wasn't aware that I understood these things [laughter]; and so I have been thinking for some time whether my knowledge extends to smelting gold, playing the flute, and painting pictures. For I have never been taught these things any more than I have been taught farming, but I have watched men working at these arts, just as I have watched them farming.[x]

A few more passages, then I will be through with it.

> Socrates: But the olive—how shall we plant that, Ischomachos?
> Ischomachos: You know quite well and are only trying to draw me out again. For I am sure you see that a deeper hole is dug for the olive (it is constantly being done on the roadside); you see also that all the growing shoots have stumps adhering to them; and you see that all the heads of the plants are coated with clay, and the part of the plant that is above ground is wrapped up.
> Yes [Socrates says—LS], I see all this. [Seeing here literally, of course, at the roadside when you pass by—LS]
> You do! Then what is there in it that you do not understand? Is it that you don't know how to put the crocks on the top of the clay, Socrates?
> Socrates: Of course there is nothing in what you have said that I do not know, Ischomachos. But I am again set thinking what can have made me answer "No" to the question you put to me awhile ago, when you asked me briefly, Did I understand planting? For I thought I should have nothing to say about the right method of planting. But now that you have undertaken to question me in

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[ix] *Oeconomicus* 15.10-11. Strauss reads from the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd (1923).
[x] *Oeconomicus* 18. 9.

> particular, my answers, you tell me, agree exactly with the views of a farmer so famous for his skill as yourself. Can it be that questioning is a kind of teaching, Ischomachos?[xi]

That is the closest Xenophon comes to the recollection teaching.

Student: Excuse me, what is the reference for that?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Is there a book number or chapter number?

LS: Ya. Well, the whole part from chapter 15 on. Fifteen to the end, or say 15 to 20. Now one more passage.

> [Soc]: "However, is the planting of fruit trees another branch of agriculture?" Ischomachus continued.
> It is indeed, answered Ischomachos.
> Then how can I understand all about sowing and yet know nothing of planting?
> Ischomachos: What! Don't you understand it?
> Socrates: How can I, when I do not know what kind of soil to plant in, nor how deep a hole to dig, nor how broad, nor how much of the plant should be buried, nor how it must be set in the ground to grow best?
> Ischomachos: Come then, learn whatever you don't know. I am sure that you have seen the sort of trenches they dig for plants.
> Yes, often enough.
> Did you ever see one more than three feet deep?
> No, of course not [laughter]—not more than two and a half.
> Well, did you ever see one more than three feet broad?
> Of course not, no more than two feet.[xii]

So Socrates knows everything by merely looking at it. Now this is a kind of Xenophontic caricature of the doctrine that knowledge can be acquired by mere questioning because it is in the soul. In other words, although the word recollection is not used, Socrates remembers what he has seen and Ischomachos draws it out from him.

Now what is the difference between this caricature of recollection, of which I have given you a specimen, and the recollection as presented in the slave scene of the *Meno*? This is a question addressed to you.[50] [Socrates] has seen these things and therefore he can answer the question; the slave has seen these things and therefore he can answer the question. What are the differences?

Student: Obviously, one thing is that Socrates has seen these things from his personal experience in everyday life, but the slave has never seen geometric things—

[xi] *Oeconomicus* 19.13-15.
[xii] *Oeconomicus* 19. 1-3.

LS: Yes, but[51] I think we can be a tiny bit more precise. Socrates has seen these things in this life, whereas the slave has seen it prior to his birth. Socrates hasn't seen these things prior to his birth; no such claim is raised here. That is very true. And also another point.[52] The slave is asked about mathematical things, and here there is no question of mathematical things, except numbers casually mentioned (three feet, two feet, and so on), but surely not mathematical questions. So that indicates the Platonic doctrine of recollection has nothing to do with memory and remembering in the ordinary sense of the term. This is not generally known, this story in the *Oeconomicus*, so that I thought I should draw your attention to it.

Now we have to turn now to Klein's digression, which begins on page 108.[53] Now this digression, as you can see, is very long; it reads from page 108 to page 172, and we cannot possibly discuss everything.[54] But there is much which is badly in need of our considering it. Quite a few things are, I believe, unintelligible if one does not study the Platonic dialogue in question simultaneously—for example, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*—and therefore I have to make a selection. I'll read to you first some things from page 108 and 109.

> The exhibition [of the slave—LS] was meant to show—to Meno and to us—that properly speaking, there is no learning—and no teaching either—and that what goes under the name of "learning" ought to be called "recollecting." Can *we* assent to that change of names? Before we give or withhold our assent we have to examine carefully not only what the term *anamnesis* [recollection—LS] by itself implies but also, and above all, why this term, whenever it is being related in Platonic dialogues to "learning," seems inseparably tied to a mythical frame.[xiii]

And therefore he will discuss the various Platonic dialogues. But then he begins on page 109 a discussion of Aristotle's treatise *On Memory and Recollection*, making it clear that in Aristotle's treatise, which is a part of the so-called *Parva Naturalia*, the small natural science writing[s], has this great advantage in a way, that it is wholly unmythical—I mean, it deals with ordinary recollection and so—and of course also wholly undramatic; and therefore[55] we don't require this kind of watchfulness which is required of us when we read the dialogue. Now let us see. I give you only a very brief and inadequate summary. "Memories are about what happened in the *past*." Obviously. But about what we experienced in the past? We do not have memory of what Nephertite did on such and such a day, you know? Obviously not, because if we would find it out through diggings, it would not be memory because *we* have not experienced it. At the bottom of page 109:

> To remember something means to possess a more or less persistent image of that something as it happened or appeared in the past, comparable to a picture[xiv] or an

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[xiii] Klein, 108.

[xiv] Strauss consistently omits the Greek words and Stephanus numbers in Klein. Here Klein gives (*zōgraphēma*, 450a32).

> imprint[xv] made by a seal ring.[xvi] [These are the Aristotelian expressions—LS] In the terminology of the sixth and seventh books of the *Republic* the faculty of remembering thus presents a special case of image making.[xvii] Although Aristotle does not use that term, he devotes about a quarter of the chapter to the description and discussion of what is meant by it.[xviii] To have a memory of something is tantamount to perceiving the "imprint"[xix] as an *image*[xx] of that which is no longer present.[xxi] [xxii]

Recollection, in contradistinction to memory, is a deliberate recapturing of something formerly had. In recollecting, therefore, we are aware that we have forgotten the thing in question: Oh, I have completely forgotten it; now I remember. Whereas as regards memories, we either have them or we have lost them. When we have them, we have of course no awareness of forgetting. If you think of, say, someone dead a long time ago whom you knew, when you think of him and you remember him you have no awareness at that moment of having forgotten him. But also when we lose these imprints we are not aware of our forgetting them; they simply slip. And a last point, on page 111:

> Special care is taken[xxiii] [by Aristotle—LS], too, *not* to identify learning and recollecting. Even learning or rediscovering something for the second time, i.e., re-acquiring "lost" knowledge, need not mean recollecting[xxiv], because the action of recollection is characterized by the accompanying awareness that what is being recollected, including something previously "known," has been *forgotten*, while such awareness is lacking in the case of learning.[xxv]

In other words, there are cases of second learning which are still not recollecting, because we have forgotten it completely and we learn for the second time. That is not recollecting.

Now [56][regarding] what Klein here said on page 110 at the top: remembering is a special kind of *eikasia*, as the Greek word is. *Eikasia* means the faculty to see an image as an image.[57] That is not so easy; that takes some time (you see it clearly in the case of children how long it takes to see an image as an image), and therefore also imagemaking, because you cannot make an image without knowing it is an image which you are making. Now this connection between memory and imagemaking leads Klein to a

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[xv] Klein gives the Greek: (*tupos*).
[xvi] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers (cf. 450a32 and b16).
[xvii] Klein gives the Greek (*eikasia*).
[xviii] Klein gives the placeholder (450b12ff.)
[xix] Klein gives the Greek (—a *fantasma*—).
[xx] Klein gives the Greek (*ōs eikōn*).
[xxi] Klein gives the Stephanus number (451a15).
[xxii] Klein, 109-110.
[xxiii] Klein adds "too."
[xxiv] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers (451b7-9).
[xxv] Klein, 111. Emphases in original.

discussion of one of the most famous parts of the *Republic*, the divided line in the sixth book, in which[58] imagemaking plays a very great role.

I wonder whether it is worth our while to begin [that passage] now, because I'm sure I cannot complete that. It might be wiser to[59] bring up some points which have been pushed back. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I was going to ask about this Greek word. It's the faculty to recognize an image as an image, so I see a tree—

LS: Not only recognize it—all right; recognize in the wider sense, yes.

Mr. Burnam: But also to make an image?

LS: Yes. Because[60] [it is] is quite common in our words that their meanings are enlarged, not necessarily injudiciously.[61] It probably means primarily imagemaking, but it can also have the meaning of knowing an image as an image. Surely the two things belong together. You cannot make an image without knowing that it's an image.[62] Yes, this knowing images as images is the basis for any possible imagemaking.

Mr. Burnam: It doesn't seem to necessarily apply. I mean, you know—

LS: No, I think it is just a matter of fact of the Greek usage. But it is not unintelligible, is it, this usage?

Mr. Burnam: The first link between the imagemaking implying recognizing it as an image wasn't what I was investigating; I was just wondering how could you say that recognition of a reflection of an object in a pool could be—

LS: No, I just wanted to mention this as an example of knowing an image as an image which is not preceded by imagemaking. When you see your reflection in water, you see that image as your image, and the image was not made by you or any other human being. I do not see the difficulty.

Mr. Burnam: Well, the word is—apparently, [the] conclusion is that the word is simply ambiguous as—

LS:[63] No, I think, don't use here any metaphorical meaning such as "our image in Asia," and so—you know, as you read in the daily papers—but take it in its literal sense and proceed judiciously to less literal senses—ascend judiciously to less literal senses. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: What does recollection seek to recover?[64] Does it recover a memory, or—?

LS:[65] Sure. What else could it be? Something which you have—think, one remembers the people who are dead, who are particularly close to one. One can say that one does never

forget them; one always remembers them. But one forgets quite a few incidents, and this is a matter of recollecting. That would be an example of the difference. But what Aristotle speaks about in his treatise is of course in no way the Platonic recollection but only the phenomenon of recollection as we all can know it, and the point is that[66] there is no necessary connection between memory and seeking, but there is an important connection between recollection and seeking. We can seek to recover what we have forgotten. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: At the end of the last meeting you were speaking about prudence and knowledge, prudence leading to practical wisdom leading—well, not to knowledge but leading one to attaining happiness, true human happiness. And I thought that you were about to say that prudence alone wouldn't lead you to this, or else that prudence would have to be for Plato modified by knowledge.

LS: Ya.[67] Well, I'll try to explain that. Let us assume that the objective of prudence is happiness, and not every view of happiness is a sound one, so we have to distinguish between what is truly happiness and what is only imagined to be happiness. You have read this *ad nauseam* in Farabi, that distinction.[xxvi] How [and on what basis] can we make this distinction between[68] true and imaginary happiness in a solid manner? It is the same question, if you turn it around, which we have in the *Republic*: Can we say what the various virtues are without knowing the parts of the soul of which they are perfection? Now the common point is this: Is not ultimately all awareness, all knowledge in the wider sense, based on theoretical knowledge?[69] Of course quite a few men are prudent without possessing that theoretical knowledge, but they would not be able to defend their prudence. One can state this as follows: *De jure*, prudence is autonomous. It grows up in human beings under certain conditions and not in all cases. Some people never become prudent under any conditions, and we all must have seen such people. And people are prudent to different degrees.[70] Men grow up to prudence without special institutions for that—I mean, [71]even today there are no departments of prudence in universities [laughter], and there are only departments of—how shall I say?—ministerial arts which administer to prudence.[72] But now then something very strange happens. There are prudent statesmen—we hope so, prudent from time to time—and who, on the basis of what they know and on a sober estimate of what the alternatives for the future are, take care of the ship of state. But then there come people who have a philosophy of history, i.e., who in the simplest sense claim they know in which direction the wave of the future is bound to take. This is the danger to prudence. So what do you do in such a case? The prudent man as prudent man may be helpless. He may not be able to say more,[73] as Churchill said occasionally to Roosevelt: "Nonsense."[xxvii] But that is not an argument. So there must be then men, a man or a body of men, who will consider that philosophy of history which threatens prudence. Does it not make sense? So prudence, while *de jure* sovereign, is *de facto* in need of support by theoretical knowledge because the criticism

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[xxvi] See, for example, Al-Farabi, *The Enumeration of the Sciences* and *The Attainment of Happiness*, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963/72).

[xxvii] We were unable to locate a reference for this anecdote.

of philosophy of history is manifestly the work of a theoretical pursuit and not of prudence.

Mr. Butterworth: Does that mean that you would say that there is no qualitative difference in the happiness that the theoretical man would have versus the happiness of prudence—

LS: No, prudence is meant to lead to happiness and therefore it is not in itself happiness. I mean, on the lowest level, in the vulgar sense of the word prudence, where it means simply what many people understand by prudence—a prudent guy, he plays well on the stockmarket and this kind of thing, where happiness means being rich—then prudence is of course a way toward riches, and not riches [themselves]. And the same would also be true on the highest level: prudence as a way toward philosophic insight is not in itself philosophic insight. Good. But in Plato that is more complex.

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[1] Deleted "I have been asked last time about the examination, and well, that is very simple. The last meeting of this class will be on the 20…on the 19th of May. One week later at the same time, the same station, we will assemble for the examination. A question or two questions will be dictated to you and you will answer them within the one hour and a half. The questions will not be nasty or traps but they will simply test your memory, [laughter] and your understanding. And that is all I think I can say. Or is there any other point which you would like to know? Yeah…and well you have a whole week between the last meeting of this class and the examination so that you can read the *Meno* again, because it will…the question will deal in one way or another with the *Meno*, [laughter] and so that you are fully prepared. You will…It would be wise not to bring the text or your notes to the class because that might give an unfair advantage to the purely mechanical memory, which is the notes. Is there any other question I should answer in connection with the examination? So that you do not become too greatly frightened and perhaps get into all kinds of troubles for which only a—how do they call them?—a head-shrinker could help you? Is there any…No, all right, then we turn—return—to the *M* We have…."
[2] Changed from "Well there are three moralities, one of the law—the Hobbist view of morality, and one is the religious view, and there is a third one, the morality of the philosophers, and that he calls…he uses here the term reputation, or terms of this kind."
[3] Changed from "So…But to come back now."
[4] Deleted "How…."
[5] Deleted "You know?"
[6] Deleted "was called…."
[7] Deleted "It is concerned…."
[8] Deleted "it is…."
[9] Deleted "and."
[10] Changed from "When someone says I have stolen…you…I have not stolen this thing—like, we have a case now in California, I have not committed shop-lifting—and then the same individual says the next day, I did commit it but I was sick."
[11] Deleted "word…."
[12] Deleted "Every…."
[13] Deleted "do."
[14] Deleted "Epicurus states…"
[15] Deleted "it."
[16] Deleted "that."
[17] Deleted "and."
[18] Deleted "there is…."
[19] Changed from "But what…Still you must also consider the basis of this reasoning. Why is virtue not possible, according to…what is the proof?"
[20] Deleted "No you wouldn't be able to answer…."
[21] Deleted "see, and." Moved "try to."

[22] Deleted "You would do that."
[23] Changed from "The subject…Now the sophistication is this."
[24] Deleted "the fact."
[25] Changed from "That is of course also underlying the Marxist view, more seriously speaking, the Marxist view that is a kind of…knowing is a kind of exchange between man and his environment."
[26] Deleted "Yes, but…Well, what is…."
[27] Deleted "That is… But..let me…."
[28] Changed from "Well, I again…Sure, the famous beginning of modern philosophy, say in Descartes' *Meditations*, is of course in an infinitely sophisticated version, preserved in German idealism, and in a still more sophisticated and complicated form preserved in so called existentialism."
[29] Deleted "Now…."
[30] Moved "a distinction." Deleted "of."
[31] Deleted "And in modern…."
[32] Deleted "—they."
[33] Deleted "oh."
[34] Deleted "that is…."
[35] Deleted "…that was."
[36] Deleted "be…has to."
[37] Deleted "is the…would the impossibility…."
[38] Deleted "But it would…."
[39] Deleted "I mean, in other words."
[40] Deleted "they."
[41] Deleted "I mean that is…that…Because this good…."
[42] Changed from "He raises, as it were, he doesn't raise his eyes…raise his eyes as high as Plato does."
[43] Deleted "mean."
[44] Deleted "you know, who didn't understand."
[45] Deleted "this was…this kind of presenting the things on…."
[46] Deleted "dialogue…this."
[47] Deleted "he has described."
[48] Deleted "…before he."
[49] Deleted "just a moment."
[50] Changed from "Ischomachos has seen these things and therefore he can answer the question…answer the question."
[51] Deleted "can we…."
[52] Deleted "Well, the Meno…"
[53] Deleted "It is very hot in here."
[54] Deleted "And…."
[55] Deleted "we do not have this kind of…."
[56] Deleted "this what"
[57] Deleted "you know?"
[58] Deleted "the…the whole…in which."
[59] Deleted "have…to."
[60] Deleted "in so far…That."
[61] Changed from "If it is primarily…It probably means primarily image making but it can…it can also have the meaning of knowing an image as an image. Surely the two things are…belong together."
[62] Deleted "And on the other hand…."
[63] Changed from "No I think you don't use here any metaphorical meaning like our image in Asia, and so on, you know? As you read in the daily papers now."
[64] Deleted "Is it…."
[65] Changed from "It recovers…Sure. What else could it be? Something which you have…Think…."
[66] Deleted "recollection…."
[67] Deleted "well that is…."
[68] Deleted "…I mean what is the basis for making this distinction between."
[69] Deleted "And so that prudence…."
[70] Changed from "But prudence…Men grow up to prudence without special institutions for that."
[71] Deleted "there are"

[72] Deleted "So therefore prudence…good."
[73] Deleted "as Roosevelt said…I'm sorry, as."

Session 15: May 17, 1966

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —the digression on memory and recollection, and the first section, which we discussed briefly last time, deals with Aristotle's treatise *On Memory and Recollection*, and we will turn now to Klein's discussion of this divided line in the *Republic*. Let us see; page 110. "In the terminology of the sixth and seventh books of the *Republic* the faculty of remembering[i] presents a special case of *eikasia*." *Eikasia* is the making of images. Yes. I think that is all what we need. Now this *eikasia*, this imagemaking, is elucidated in the divided line of the *Republic*.[1]

Now Klein's commentary on the *Meno* culminates in his laying bare Socrates's laying bare of Meno's soul. Now Klein's laying bare of Meno's soul is based chiefly on the *Meno* but also, as we have seen, on the description of Meno given in Xenophon's *Anabasis*—you know, where Meno is presented as one of the Greek generals and so on. Yet the[2] use of this most striking document of Meno's arch-villainy given in the *Anabasis* is open to the objection that the Meno whom Xenophon knew and described in Asia Minor is somewhat older than the Meno we see here in Plato's dialogue. It is possible, after all, that as Meno was not a very old man, that Meno underwent a change between the meeting with Socrates and the meeting with Xenophon—and perhaps a change for the worse, so that the arch-villain becomes visible only in Asia Minor. And this might be, for all we know prior to any investigation,[3] a consequence of his conversation with Socrates; or if this sounds too shocking, of his conversation with Anytus, [which] he had in connection[4] [with his conversation with Socrates].

Now Klein's interpretation of Meno's soul, his laying bare of Meno's soul, is based in the second place on all the other Platonic dialogues which deal with recollection, *anamnesis*, and memory and related themes, and therefore the long digression is very important for his interpretation of the *Meno*. And this[5] should have been [said] in the beginning of today's lecture. Forgive me.

Now, you remember the divided line? Socrates says to Glaucon [LS writes on the blackboard]: You should take a line and divide it in two parts; and then he says it should be again divided. Each part should be divided in the same proportion[6]. So let us do it this way. Is this clear? It becomes A to B equal to C to D. Ya? Good. And this is the intelligible, and this, the visible. Intelligible meaning what is accessible to the intellect and only to the intellect. And now this part is the intelligible proper, the *noēton*, and this is called in Latin *intellectus*. And this is called *dianoia*—in Latin, *ratio*. And then we have here sense perception, and here we have this *eikasia*, the imagemaking. And the point is the intellect to reason, *dianoia*, [is] equal to sense perception to images. This is the simple proportion proposed there at the[7] [end of the sixth] book.[8]

Now. [9]For strangely, Plato calls this dimension, the dimension of sense perception—he also calls this sphere the sphere of *pistis*, which we may translate by "trust" or "reliance,"

[i] Klein adds "thus."

an apparently strange name but [one] which can be easily understood if we consider the fact with which we are all familiar, that ordinarily we put the greatest trust on what our senses perceive, on what we see and perhaps also touch.

Now the point here is this. This imagemaking and image-understanding depends on sense perception. Take the simple case of images which Plato mentions there. We see our image in water, in a lake or pond. This is always an image of something, the proper access to which is of course not the pond but to see the thing itself. Images are less genuine, less true than sense perception proper. *Eikasia*, to repeat, is the faculty to see an image as an image, and therefore also imagemaking. We could not make images if we were not able in the first place to see images as images. Now this imagemaking, although the lowest of the four, is superior in one[10] important sense to sense perception, because whereas sense perception is shared by man with the brutes, imagemaking and perceiving images as images is peculiarly human. Those of you who have observed puppies in front of mirrors will see[11] how difficult it is for dogs to see an image as an image.

Now we come now to reason, to *dianoia*,[12] [whose] ordinary activities are comparing, noting similarities and dissimilarities and hence also identities and differences, and [the] dividing of a whole into parts, and so on. I'll read to you a passage from Klein on page 117, at the top: "Our thinking activity, which Socrates at this point[ii] calls by its generic name—*noēsis*, fulfills the task."[13] Our sense of sight by itself, without the help of our reason,[14] seems unable to make this distinction.[15] [Concerning our thinking activity, Klein continues]: "It can do this because its basic function consists indeed in discriminating *and* relating, that is to say, in *counting or numbering*. For in the act of counting we both separate and combine the things we count. It can be rightly said, therefore, that the act of counting[iii] underlies any act of our (reason)[iv], i.e. of our *dianoia*."[v] The formula is well known from Hobbes's *De Corpore*, according to which thinking is reckoning. That is a late reflex of what Plato means. In a sense, reckoning is the core of what is going on in all our understanding of the sensible world.

Now mathematicians especially use the visible things as images of the mathematical things, but in geometry, you draw figures. But even in the case of numbering, you count. That[16] has perhaps been made beautifully clear by Klein in his earlier study on Greek logistics. For the Greeks, number, *arithmos*, has always the meaning of "number of," not absolute number: number of—of sheep, of dogs, of stars. And then there can also be[17], [in] the highest case, number of mere units.[18] In other words, sheep are always distinguished from each other, or dogs, or what have you; but you can also number mere units where one is indistinguishable from the other, and these are what we call numbers. But[19] we have forgotten [that these are "numbers of"], owing to that later development. In Plato and Greek thought, this knowledge, [this] awareness that number is "number of" is still present. I know only in German it is possible to make a distinction, bring out the term in existence. There are perhaps a few among you who know some German: *anzahl,*

[ii] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (524c7).
[iii] Klein gives the Greek: (*logismos*).
[iv] Klein gives only the Greek: *dianoia*.
[v] Klein, 117.

as distinguished from *zahl*. Both words are translated in English by number, but *anzahl* means always *anzahl* of, of things. And that is crucial for the Greek meaning of *arithmos*.

So the mathematicians use the visible things as images of the mathematical things, and the mathematical things are as such invisible, of course. I mean, no one has ever seen a line in the mathematical sense, or a circle, or a cube, or whatever you might think [of]. But mathematics is only the most technical form which our ordinary reasoning takes. So it is not merely mathematical understanding, but mathematical understanding is the highest form, the peak of our ordinary thinking.[20] As Klein puts it on page 119, our thinking "cannot help interpreting *all* that is visible as having the character of an 'image.'" I think that is a very important statement, and that is in a way the core of Platonism throughout [21][its] long history. All that is visible is an image of[22] something invisible. Reason uses invisible things for the understanding of the visible or sensible things, but it does not make these invisible things its theme. For example, take legal reasoning, which is [a kind of] reasoning. [It] is not sufficient for answering the question: What is law? That goes beyond it. Nor can there be a mathematical answer to the question of what is mathematics, or a biological answer to the question of what is biology. They are a kind of question which go beyond this sphere. Dialectics makes these things its theme, and the dialectics therefore has to do no longer with the objects of reason, especially the numbers and geometrical figures, but with what Plato calls the ideas. On page 124: "in the segment of the intelligible,[vi] the lower subsection is characterized by its dependency on, and its relation to, the higher one." [LS writes on blackboard] Just as images, say, in water or in glass are dependent on the visible, sensible things, the objects of the mathematicians—figures, numbers, and so on—are a kind of images of the ideas, whatever the ideas may be, which is not here discussed. The relation of reason to intellect resembles that of imagemaking to sense perception. Just as imagemaking depends on sensible things, the objects of reason depend on the intelligibles proper. The objects of reason, let us say the mathematical objects, are like shadows, images of the ideas.

Now this superiority of the objects of dialectic—let us use the simple word, the ideas—to the mathematical objects was in a way alluded to in the passage of the *Meno* where Socrates speaks of the two kinds of definitions. You remember? The two kinds of definitions, in 76d4, where Socrates gives this definition of color for which Meno had asked. Do you have that?

Student: Yes.

LS: An effluence—

Student: Yes.

> [SOC.] "So now "conceive my meaning," as Pindar says: colour is an effluence of figures, commensurate with sight and sensible.
> [MEN.] Your answer, Socrates, seems to me excellently put.

[vi] Klein adds "too."

> [SOC.] Yes, for I expect you find its terms familiar; and at the same time I fancy you observe that it enables you to tell what sound and smell are, and numerous other things of the kind.
> [MEN.] Certainly.
> [SOC.] It is an answer in the high poetic style, Meno—

LS: "Tragic," "tragic."

Student:

> in the high tragic style, Meno, and so more agreeable to you than that about figure.
> [MEN.] Yes, it is.
> [SOC.] But yet, son of Alexidemus, I am inclined to think the other was the better of the two; and I believe you also would prefer it, if you were not compelled, as you were saying yesterday, to go away before the mysteries— (76d3-e9)

LS: So let us stop there. So the first definition of color[23]—what was it precisely? I have forgot it now.

Student: The first definition. "I call figure in which the solid ends—"

LS: No, no. Now where is it? Is it in 75b or thereabouts? "Figure is that which alone of the beings follows always color."[vii] And this would also be the other way around: no figure without color; no color without figure. Now[24] this definition of color was better than the last one, the mathematical one which he gave later. Good. Now the main point here[25] which Klein makes, and which to my knowledge has never been made in this way before, is that the mathematical things are in their relation to the ideas like images of sensible things to the things themselves. Good. We leave it at this then.

Now Klein turns then on a little bit later on to[26] Plato's *Phaedo*, which he discusses at great length, and on page 128, bottom. *Phaedo* is of course, as I'm sure many of you will remember, the dialogue which Socrates had on the day of his death in prison. [Klein is discussing the notion of] equal things: "The terms of this sequence are not comprehended within the confines of the visible domain: 'equal things' are perceived through our senses, 'the equal itself' or 'equality'[viii] is not. There can be only *knowledge* (*epistēmē*) of the latter, acquired by means of our senses 'out of'[ix] our perceiving equal visible things and out of nowhere else."[x][xi] So [27]equal things we see, but how do we know that they are equal? If we do not have a preceding knowledge of equality, we cannot recognize them as equal. What about this knowledge of equality? This is not sensible, because we never see with our senses two things absolutely equal; that is purely intellectual, intelligible. Now[28] let us read what Klein says in the sequel, on page 129.[29] This is the fundamental

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[vii] In original: "Figure, let us say, is the only existing thing that is found always following colour."
[viii] Klein gives the Greek: (*isotēs*).
[ix] Klein gives the Greek: (*ek*).
[x] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*mē allothen*—75a5-7)
[xi] Klein, 128-29.

difference between intellectual and sensible knowledge by which Plato and Aristotle, stand and fall—and quite a few others. But the most immediate problem for us reading the *Meno* is this:

> How can this acquisition of knowledge [say, of the equal as equal—LS] be called "recollection"? The answer to that question, in the *Phaedo*, is made dependent on our realizing that the equality of apparently equal visible things is a deficient one, is tainted with "inequality": we realize that two visibly equal things are not quite equal, since sometimes they appear to one man equal and to another unequal, although each of these things remains the same. To be able to recognize this deficiency [in this case, this deficient equality—LS] so the argument runs, means that we must have previously known[xii] perfect equality, which can never be found in visible things. And it is this previous, but forgotten, knowledge [because we never thought of it before—LS] that we *recollect* when, in perceiving visibly equal things, we realize that their equality is merely an approximation, a copy, an "image" of perfect equality, of "the equal itself."[xiii]

Now since this knowledge, say, of equality, is presupposed in every recognition of this very questionable equality we observe, we must have acquired it prior to birth but lost it when we were born, and yet [we] recover it on the occasion of sense perceptions which we can not interpret, as it were, without having recourse to the equal itself. Now the doctrine of recollection in the *Phaedo* is connected, just as in the *Meno* (it is much more developed in the *Phaedo* than in the *Meno*) [30]with the immortality of the soul. The same is also true of the presentation of recollection in the *Phaedrus* but there, there is a certain difficulty. I turn to page 152 now, and here he speaks of the *Phaedrus*. Do you[31] remember the *Phaedrus*, the dialogue on erotic speeches? [It takes place] outside of[32] the city of Athens, between Socrates and Phaedrus. [There are] only these two characters.

> Learning is thus again identified with recollecting. We gather, however, that learning consists in reviving, as it were, the imprints left on our memory "within" the soul and—for the most part[xiv] "forgotten" after our journey to the super heavenly place,[xv] [to which we have been and around which we have been travelling prior to birth—LS]. Thus, in the *Phaedrus*, not only the activity of recollecting but also memory acquires mythical dimensions. The soul of the "philosopher" is close, as close as it can be, to the highest region, the region of the divine, by virtue of its memory.[xvi] It is to memory, more than to recollection, that Socrates, somewhat apologetically, it seems[xvii], pays tribute in his dithyramb [in the *Phaedrus*—LS].[xviii]

[xii] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus numbers: (*proeidenai*—74e3, 9)
[xiii] Klein, 129.
[xiv] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (250a1-b1)
[xv] Klein gives only the Greek: *hyperouranos topos*.
[xvi] Klein gives the Greek and several Stephanus numbers: (*mnēmē*-249c5-6: cf. 252e5-253a5, also 254b5).
[xvii] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (cf. 250c7-8).
[xviii] Klein, 152.

Now why is this so? The answer is given before, in Klein's comment in the preceding paragraph.

> in a context far removed from the "divine madness"[xix] of the "mythic hymn,"[xx] but still tied to an 'Egyptian' tale about the invention of writing, [in which] the god-king Thamus is made to criticize [the invention of writing—LS]. Far from being a help to memory and craftsmanship[xxi],writing will promote forgetfulness in the souls of men engaged in learning[xxii] by making them neglect the use of their own memory[xxiii] [meaning, relying on writings—LS]: relying on what is written, they will be led to their recollections from without, from imprints not their own[xxiv], instead of recollecting by themselves, from "within." Writing does not help memory: it can only remind those "who know" of what the written words are about.[xxv] The written word could be justly called a sort of image[xxvi] of the one which is alive[xxvii] and authentic,[xxviii] of the one "which is being written with knowledge in the soul of the learner"[xxix], while the process of examining and teaching[xxx] what is true[xxxi] goes on.[xxxii]

Now[33] I do not know whether it is very useful to read all these passages about the other dialogues where recollection is mentioned. Look at the title on page 157: "The avoidance of the recollection[xxxiii] thesis in other dialogues, and especially[34] in the *Theaetetus*." On page 168, when he speaks of the *Theaetetus*: "Conceivably[xxxiv], a more thorough investigation of learning and forgetting could throw more light on their 'intermediate' position and therefore also on the relation of 'forgetfulness' to the state of 'not knowing.'" Obviously, not knowing is not necessarily forgetfulness. "But this investigation is nowhere to be found. It would amount, at any rate, to an argumentative examination of the *anamnēsis* thesis itself." Plato presents the *anamnēsis* thesis in a number of dialogues, but it is not examined argumentatively. "Are we not led to the conclusion: we have to withhold our assent to the thesis that learning is recollecting?" — that is,[35] on the basis of Plato himself. Of course we cannot entirely avoid that. Surely,

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[xix] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (256b6).
[xx] Klein gives the placeholder: (cf. 265b6-c1)
[xxi] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*mnēmēs te . . . kai sophias pharmakon*—274e6)
[xxii] Klein gives the Greek: (*ton mathontōn*).
[xxiii] Klein gives the Greek: (*mnēmēs ameletēsiai*).
[xxiv] Klein gives the Greek: (*hyp' allotriōn typōn*).
[xxv] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (275a5; d1; 278a1)
[xxvi] Klein gives the Greek: (*eidōlon ti*)
[xxvii] Klein gives the Greek: (*zōn kai empsychos*).
[xxviii] Klein gives the Greek: (*gnēsios*).
[xxix] Klein gives the Greek: (*ho met' epistēmēs graphetai en tēi tou manthanontos psychēi*).
[xxx] Klein gives the Greek: (*anakrisis kai didachē*).
[xxxi] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (276a; 277e9: 276c9).
[xxxii] Klein, 152.
[xxxiii] Klein gives only the Greek: *anamnēsis*.
[xxxiv] Klein adds "then."

although there is no argumentative discussion of the *anamnēsis* thesis, the Platonic dialogues supply us with material for such a discussion. And this might be possible. Is it not possible, in other words, to state in non-mythical language, not in the language in which the recollection thesis is framed, what Socrates would fight for in earnest?

Now let us see how Klein goes on. "But would not such a conclusion miss a most important point? Does not the thesis itself of necessity preclude any didactic argument about its validity? Was not that the reason why Socrates refrained from *telling* Meno more about it? What Meno asked and we are asking now is: How can we ascertain that what the thesis claims is true?"[xxxv] In other words,[36] as Klein develops in the sequel, every speech about the highest and the whole, the most comprehensive, is inadequate, and therefore an argumentation can never sufficiently settle it. The highest and the whole transcends every speech, whether it is argumentative speech (*logos*) or mythical speech (*mythos)*. Now what then is the *mythos*? That is the question to which we turn now.[37]

[38]The recollection thesis, to remind you of the connection, is a mythical thesis. What is the meaning of mythical thesis in Plato? On [page]169. "There is a tendency to interpret a myth told in a Platonic dialogue, especially one told by Socrates, as a lever of persuasion more potent than any other way of speaking, appealing to less and yet to more than our understanding, a unique[39] means of conveying the incommunicable." A little bit later on the same page, the next paragraph:

> Are not myths of that kind exalted opinions, human *doxasmata* of a most impressive and unforgettable stature? Do they not serve as an insufficiently or too brightly illuminated background for all the opinions in which and by which we live?
>
> What ought to be stressed is that myths never stand by themselves. That is their weakness and their strength. It is not a matter of chance or of some particular historical development that myths, at all times and in all lands, are found transposed into, or embodied by, or enacted in rituals, ceremonies, customs, institutions, presentations, tragedies, all of which cannot exist unless we have a stake and a share in them. Conversely, the fragmented and mute *actions* of man find a language of their own in myths.[xxxvi]

What Klein is driving at here is this: to lay bare the connection between two dichotomies. The first is [LS writes on the blackboard] . . . *logos*, *ergos*. Speech and deed. The distinction is intelligible and obviously of the utmost importance, as you can easily see in the case of someone whose deeds do not jibe with his speech, which is true probably of all of us to differing degrees. Now the other one [LS writes on the blackboard] is the dichotomy of *logos* and *mythos*, say, an argumentative speech and a speech which presents to us an image. By imagery, [he means] something which has great plausibility but cannot be literally true. Now what Klein contends then is that there is a connection between these two things, an especially close connection between the myth and deed or

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[xxxv] Klein, 168.
[xxxvi] Klein, 169.

action, and so the myth appeals primarily, so to speak, to our acting rather than to our *logos*.

Now[40] what Klein says here in this paragraph which I just read on page 169, that there are myths at all times in all lands, now this would probably be granted by a large majority of social scientists today, although there are some who say that an end of ideology has come—and this means probably also an end of myth, because the distinction between *logos* and *mythos* lives on of course in our present-day distinction between science and ideology. Or do I have to make this clear? Rational knowledge: science. And ideology is not rational, whatever it may be. So the distinction between science and ideology with which we are so familiar is a descendant of the Platonic distinction between *logos* and *mythos*.[41]

But what does this statement imply? At all times and in all lands, there are myths? What are the myths of our age in this land? After all, if we don't find it here, the general statement becomes very dubious. Could Klein possibly mean biblical theology as embodied in Christian and Jewish rites? If he would go so far then one would have to say: Would this understanding of biblical religion not presuppose an argumentative examination of the biblical tradition, which would then justify this assertion?[42]

Now let us go on. In the sequel, on page 169 to 70, Klein speaks of a passage at the beginning of the *Phaedrus*,[xxxvii] where

> Socrates dismisses as a sort of "boorish wisdom"[xxxviii] the attempts to reduce their respective content [of the myth—LS] to some "natural" and trivial event magnified out of all proportion. It would be difficult, at any rate, says Socrates, to "set straight"[xxxix] mythical monsters like Centaurs and the Chimaera and the Gorgons and Pegasus in a similar way, according to what is "probable"[xl] [plausible—LS]. He, Socrates, has no time to spare for this sort of guessing game: he is preoccupied with the[43] all-absorbing task of "knowing himself," of finding out whether he is a beast even more complex, more inflated and fiercer than the monster Typhon or else a gentler and simpler living being to whose lot has fallen something of a lofty and serene nature.
>
> Socrates is not interested in that "boorish wisdom" about mythical stories, but he is quite evidently interested in those stories themselves and in everything connected with them.[xli]

Now first, what does this mean, the rejection of the "boorish wisdom"? You hear such strange stories, like those of the Centaurs. One thing you can do is to say: Well, there

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[xxxvii] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (229c4-230a6)
[xxxviii] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*agroikos tis sophia*—e 3).
[xxxix] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*epanorthousthai*—d 6)
[xl] Klein gives the Greek and the Stephanus number: (*kata to eikos*—e 2). Strauss evidently regards "plausible" as a better translation.
[xli] Klein, 169-70.

never were any Centaurs, that's absurd; this mixture of man and horse is impossible in the nature of things. So-called rationalist criticism, of which Socrates says here that it doesn't interest him, it's boorish. What is much better is to use these stories of Centaurs as a[44] lever for looking at myself: Am I such a preposterous, or maybe such a wonderful being as a Centaur?[45] This application to the moral use, as it were, of these stories is infinitely more important than the theoretical knowledge of their improbability, not to say absurdity. But of course, needless to say, under certain conditions these questions can become very important. Or take another case, for example, a case discussed by some other classical philosophers: stories of eclipses of the moon during a military campaign. The soldiers panic. The general knows the natural explanation. Is he not forced to make use of that "boorish wisdom" in order to stop the panic in the interest of his country? [46]These kind[s] of question are not settled here by this remark of Klein.

> Are not myths [later on in the same page—LS] in Socrates' understanding, great luminous mirrors which throw reflected light on the condition and the predicament of human life and are not mythical monsters always images of the soul itself? Even though the ultimate source of that reflected light remains hidden, to "know oneself" means, among other things, to look at oneself and one's actions in the mirrors with which those familiar, and mostly dreadful, myths have surrounded us.[xlii]

The myths owe their importance then not to their theoretical truth or untruth. They are of course not theoretical truth. But they can be and are necessary here of great moral use. [Continuing toward the bottom of the same page]:

> A myth provides some measure for our actions. Platonic dialogues are set to measure that measure. [In other words, there are many myths which do not deserve to be used as measures for action—LS] To try to *find* the right yardstick for this task, to try to *find* the source of that reflected light, means to be engaged in Philosophy. To *combat* the pernicious effect of a false yardstick, to combat the distortion which those mirrors produce, requires the setting up and telling of new myths. Myth-telling is indeed the paradigm of all rhetorical art: it tends to initiate an effort in the soul of men and to beget action. It is in actions that human excellence and its opposite reveal themselves. A new myth, a Socratic-Platonic myth, will always speak of the Soul and will always be concerned about the undistorted Whole. But its truth will not be found in its words.[xliii]

Where would its truth be found? Only in our reaction, in our acting elicited by the myth. The Socratic-Platonic myth is then a myth of a higher order, a myth of a new kind. The Socratic-Platonic myths are conscious images of the soul and of nothing else, but mostly dreadful. Klein does not make this sufficiently clear by what he says on the story told in the *Meno*. You remember the story told in the *Meno*: there is guilt, purification; and the consequence drawn from that: to live most piously. Do you remember that? And then only after Socrates has said that, he draws a further conclusion: the soul is immortal, and hence recollection is possible; hence learning is possible[47]. [Klein's] sole example, as far

[xlii] Klein, 170.
[xliii] Klein, 170-71.

as I can see, is taken from Plato's *Phaedo*, where Socrates—according to him very plausibly—is presented as a new Theseus who frees the seven-times-two Athenian young people, youths and maidens, from the true Minotaurs.[xliv] Do you remember the story told at the beginning of the *Phaedo*? [In olden times] the Athenians sent every year [48]seven boys and [seven] girls to Crete in order to be given over to that dreadful beast, the steer of Minos, the Minotaurus. And then Theseus killed the Minotaurus.[49] The Athenians celebrate this every year, and that was the reason why Socrates's execution was postponed. That was a holy time in which no execution took place.[50] Now according to Klein's interpretation, what happens in the *Phaedo* is the true myth, namely, how a new Theseus, a new founder of Athens, kills the true Minotaurus, and that true Minotaurus is death. Minotaurus is an image of death, clearly; but of death naturally as dreaded, as a being outside of man, waiting for man, approaching him. All these things are developed in the *Phaedo* when Socrates's death is described. This is the only example which Klein discusses in the whole book and he does not make any use, as far as I can see, of the myth of the *Meno* for substantiating his view of the myth. But there is of course also another figure like death which is very important in Plato, and which is explicitly dealt with, whereas death is only tacitly dealt with as such a being outside of man with whom man is concerned. That other being is Eros, who is explicitly dealt with especially in the *Banquet*. And there it is said that Eros is a *daimon*, a being in between men and gods—not a god. I think it is very important that the treatment of Eros as an independent being is explicit, whereas the treatment of death is only implicit.

Regarding the *Phaedo* in particular, which is more detailed on recollection than any other Platonic dialogue, we must consider the fact pointed out by Klein that in the *Phaedo* the doctrine of recollection is not presented there as a myth as it is in a way in the *Meno*. Strictly speaking, it is of course not presented as a myth [even in the *Meno*] because it is not called a myth, but one can say the mere fact that he refers to traditions of holy men is the Platonic way of[51] telling us that a certain doctrine is a myth. But nothing of this kind happens in the *Phaedo*. In the *Phaedo*, recollection is presented as something that can be demonstrated. And that is quite natural because the treatment of recollection there, just as in the *Meno*, is part of the discussion of the immortality of the soul. And the main point of the *Phaedo* is Socrates's demonstrating the immortality of the soul. The context cannot be disregarded, of course: Socrates's[52] friends are very sad about Socrates's dying, and Socrates is not sad about his dying. There we have the paradoxical situation that the dying man must comfort the survivors regarding his[53] imminent death. It is possible—and that is surely what Klein thinks—that Socrates regarded those demonstrations of the immortality of the soul given in the *Phaedo* as not valid. Let us assume that he is right. Would this make the doctrine of the immortality of the soul a myth? No. It would only make it an exoteric teaching, which is something very different from a myth. The explicit myth of the *Phaedo*—there is one—is given at the end of the dialogue and has a very different theme. So we would have to raise a question which Klein never raises: What is the relation between an exoteric teaching, which is also meant to have a good effect on our action, and a myth?

[xliv] Strauss refers here to Klein's comment on the *Phaedo* on page 126 of the commentary.

Now to state it somewhat differently: If the Socratic-Platonic myths are images of the soul (which makes sense), have the soul as their object, this implies that they, in contradistinction to the older myths, do not have the gods as their objects. That is a peculiarity. But why? What kind of beings are the gods in the view of Plato and Socrates? Before this question is properly elaborated, not to say answered, the whole doctrine of the Platonic myth as Klein presents it lacks a foundation, to say nothing of other measures which would have to be taken.

We turn now to the practical result of Klein's statements about myth. Yes?

Student: Would you just elaborate a little bit on the difference between the myth and the exoteric teaching?

LS: Because an exoteric teaching is not an image. I mean, there are no mythical beings—if you say the soul is immortal you don't use images.[54] When Plato discusses, for example, providence, or reward and punishment for badness or goodness, say, in the second book of the *Laws,* there is no reference in that [discussion] to any[thing] mythical. So he raises the question whether this doctrine is true or not, and he doesn't properly answer it, but there is no question that these are not myths.[55] Well, to begin at the beginning of the whole question, there are myths in Plato; there is no doubt about that. But if we want to be quite careful, we would have to say[56] [that] we can to begin with regard only those passages as mythical which are explicitly called mythical. Is this not the simplest and safest procedure? But it is of course not sufficient. To mention only one example, the story told at the end of the *Gorgias* by Socrates to Callicles is explicitly called a *logos* and not a myth, and I think no one would be willing to accept that. And in the *Meno* this [short] passage which we have read[57] about recollection is also not called a myth.

Student: Am I right in understanding that for both the myth and the exoteric teaching, the action that results from it is sort of the important part but the question of whether the doers of the action believe it literally are not; whereas in the myth they will not believe it literally, in the exoteric teaching they are advised to [believe it]?

LS: No, let me put it this way. In[58] an explicit Platonic myth it is understood it is not literally true. But, say, in the teaching that good actions are rewarded and bad actions are punished by gods, there is no qualification of this kind; obviously not, because it would deprive it of all its effect.

Student: Well, something like the myth of Er, which is called a myth, now—

LS: This is not literally true and not meant to be. But if you say there is divine reward and punishment but [admit that] this is only a way of speaking, it's an image, [then] you deprive it of its practical effect. So we can say there are assertions which can have the effect on our actions while they are admittedly not literally true, whereas[59] in the case of the exoteric teaching the opposite would be true. But this distinction is not a distinction explicitly made by Plato anywhere. But since the whole use of the term myth implies the

interpreters going beyond the explicit statements of Platonic characters, then one is equally justified in making this distinction. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Would it be fair to say that for Klein, that the reason he doesn't raise such a question as this of the distinction between myth and exoteric teaching is that according to his introduction there is no such thing as an exoteric teaching of any note in Plato?

LS: Oh, he doesn't say that.

Mr. Butterworth: By raising the question of—

LS: No, he[60] hardly says anything[61] [except] in his own name. He quotes Schleiermacher. Now what Schleiermacher says in the general introduction to his translation of Plato is perhaps the best statement ever made, at least in modern times, about the subject. Whether Schleiermacher himself remained loyal to it in his prefaces to the individual Platonic dialogues is very questionable—in other words, he may not have fully understood what he said in his general introduction. This happens, you know, even among students, not only among very famous men like Schleiermacher. [Laughter] And what Schleiermacher said is this. Schleiermacher fights a very crude notion, a traditional view in the lower and late antiquity and so on, [that] there is an esoteric teaching, meaning a secret teaching which is known [62]from sources outside of the dialogues, if at all. Now what Schleiermacher says is this. There is no Platonic teaching which is not found in the dialogues, meaning the so-called esoteric teaching can only be the deeply understood dialogues themselves and not some amulets or what have you which have been handed down throughout the ages. I exaggerate a bit to make it clear. Schleiermacher does not deny—he says there is a skin[xlv] (that is his simile), [63]and there is a flesh [of] meaning beneath the skin, and if you see the skin only and know the skin only you know very little. Now that is surely true and true not only of Plato, but particularly visible perhaps in the case of Plato.

Mr. Butterworth: But then when you speak of an exoteric teaching, would you say that this is the skin or something more than that?

LS: Ya,[64] that is a point which Schleiermacher does not make sufficiently clear. Well, Schleiermacher had before himself a very low and uninteresting interpretation—[from the] late eighteenth century, let us say second half of the eighteenth century—[65]which still retained something of the older[66] original view, but in a very low way. And Schleiermacher says this: What should this secret teaching be? And the first thing which would occur to anyone in the eighteenth century and also in earlier ages was: Well, what did Socrates think about the gods worshiped by the city of Athens? And then Schleiermacher says: Well, every child reading Plato can see that Socrates did not accept these gods. Not every child, but I would say every thoughtful reader can see that. But then the same Schleiermacher, in his introduction to his[67] German translation of the

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[xlv] "mit einer angewachsenen Haut überkleidet" (clothed with an adhesive skin). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, 2nd edition (Berlin, 1817), part 1, vol. 1, *Einleitung*, 20.

Apology of Socrates, says the accusation[68] [against] Socrates was unwarranted since Socrates believed in the gods of the city, which I regard as a plain contradiction.[xlvi] So in other words, if what Schleiermacher says in the first place is true, namely, that Socrates did not believe in the gods of the city, then Socrates was guilty of the crime as charged. And then of course then you have to face this difficulty which Hegel faced but which Schleiermacher did not face: that Socrates was legally indeed guilty, but his cause was superior to the cause for which the Athenian law stood.[xlvii] So in other words, a higher stage in the development of the human mind[69] expressed itself in Socrates's thought.

Mr. Butterworth:[70] But the rest of my question is that it seems to me that your criticism of Klein for not raising the question of the distinction between Plato's exoteric teaching and his mythical teaching, that insofar as we've read the dialogue this quarter in keeping with the kind of introduction that Klein wanted us to set forth as a way of reading Plato, we wouldn't be able to say point blank: This is Plato's exoteric teaching.

LS: Oh no, that is never such a simple thing.[71] I have been arguing on his basis, namely, he does not regard[72] the argument of the *Phaedo* as a proof of the immortality of the soul.[73] I mean, one can say it is a bad proof, but Klein contends it is not meant to be a proof. He does not elaborate it, but I can easily see what he means. Socrates attempts to comfort his survivors, and a comforting speech is not necessarily a true speech. So I only argued on this basis. No, the discussion of[74] myth as myth is very inadequate in Klein's book. I am sure he would be the first to admit that. I believe it becomes[75] a serious defect for the interpretation of the *Meno* because of the link-up between the interpretation of the myth of the *Meno* and the question of piety as piety, a question to which I have referred more than once. When you read this passage, the myth, page [301 in the Loeb], at first glance there are two alternatives suggested. The first is to live piously, as piously as possible; the second, to devote one's life to study, to learning—of course not merely to mathematical study but to[76] what we now call philosophy. Now it is perfectly possible to say that philosophy is the true piety, as more than one man has said since, but it surely needs an argument and it cannot be taken for granted. Why could there not be very simple people who would not be able to philosophize in any sane sense of the term,[77] [while they would still be able to] be pious?

So[78] this is obviously connected with the question of the various kinds of virtues, at least two kinds: one going together with knowledge, and the other going together with correct opinion. You remember that, i.e., the conclusion of the dialogue where[79] Klein's interpretation is [also] not adequate. But I have to discuss it only because I am anxious to see the application of these observations of Klein or his theories to the question of *Meno*. Page 172: "It is the *action of learning* which conveys the truth about it." In other words, is learning possible or not? The answer is: learn. If you do learn, you know that learning is possible. And the recollection thesis, which implies the possibility of learning, is

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[xlvi] Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke* (1918), part 1, vol. 2, *Des Socrates Verteidigung, Einleitung*, 185.

[xlvii] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (notes from lectures delivered from 1819-31).

"proven," in quotation marks, by the fact that we learn, that we are induced by it to make the effort to learn. [Klein continues]:

> The answer to the question about the possibility of learning is not a "theory of knowledge" or an "epistemology" but the very *effort* to learn. The answer is the deed, the *ergon*, the *meletē* (the effort)[xlviii] of learning, which, in turn, may lead to the habit[xlix] of knowing. Is not that the significance of Socrates' repeated injunction addressed both to Meno and to the young slave*: peirō*, "make an attempt . . ."? And is not that the weight of the conditional clause at the end of the myth about the necessity of having courage and of not growing tired of searching, as well as of the renewed emphasis on that very point in Socrates' final prodding of Meno to join with him in the search for human excellence? Meno is now offered the opportunity to "verify" the myth [not by argument, but—LS] by his own action, and correspondingly, so are we.
>
> We shall have to see whether the exhibition of Meno's way of learning will bear out what we have been trying to learn about "recollection"—and also about memory.[l]

Now in practical terms, and in relation to the sequel, this leads up to the question which we had to raise before: What kind of a man was Meno?[80] The immediate sequel in Klein's commentary is the interpretation of the slave scene and Socrates's and Meno's conversation about that. Let us turn to page 186. We have to conclude [that] Meno has been unable to learn; that is the chief lesson which Klein draws [from that conversation].

> We have to conclude that Meno's soul lacks the dimension which makes learning and the effort of learning possible. The "derangement" of his memory consists in its being unsupported by a "third dimension" of his soul. No learning can occur without memory, but no memory fulfills its proper function unless related to some learning. Meno's soul is indeed nothing but "memory," an isolated and autonomous memory, similar to a sheet or to a scroll covered with innumerable and intermingled characters, something of a two-dimensional and shadow-like being: it is a repository of opinions but it cannot become a repository of knowledge. It has no "depth" and no "solidity" at all. Plato has a name for this kind of soul. It is a "little" or "shrunken" soul—a *psycharion*."[li]

Now this term *psycharion* occurs only once in the *Theaetetus* and then again in a single passage of the *Republic*, and nowhere else; and Klein draws conclusions from this term, *psycharion*, which of course does not occur in the *Meno*. That's all right,[81] [as he discusses on page 188 its occurrence] and especially in the *Republic*, the men of base cleverness:[lii]

[xlviii] Klein gives only the Greek term, but Strauss adds this translation.
[xlix] Klein gives only the Greek: *hexis*.
[l] Klein, 172. Ellipsis in original.
[li] Klein, 186.
[lii] Klein gives the Greek: (*panourgia*).

> "the base, yet clever" soul perverts the excellence of thoughtfulness to serve evil ends, the more so the keener its eyesight. And here again *psycharion* [little soul—LS] is the name attached to this type of mutilated soul.[liii] Meno's soul seems to be the prototype of all those mutilated and shrunken souls. Any thoughtful judgment Meno is capable of exercising is part of his *panourgia* [of his willingness to do everything in order to achieve his ends—LS]

But here of course in this passage of the *Republic* there is no reference whatever to memory.[liv]

Now the point [on] which Klein draws and to which we have referred more than once, is that Meno's arch-villainy properly and deeply understood is identical with his being only a memory man, so to speak, a man without recollecting, i.e., without the capacity and willingness to learn, depending only on opinions. This is a grave practical conclusion as far as the dialogue goes. But the objections are necessary. Most people, in fact all of us most of the time, are memory people. What kind of memory does Meno have? Klein says a particularly powerful memory. There is no proof for that; he has a certain memory, but there is no proof that it is particularly powerful. He also says a deranged memory. But deranged in what sense? We remember that he remembers easily things other than justice, and remembers justice only when Socrates compels him to remember. You remember that. The connection between memory, relying on memory without recollection, and arch-villainy is not made clear. On page 189: "The repetition invoked by the term *anamnēsis* was contrasted, throughout the dialogue, with the verbal repetition of somebody else's utterances, the kind of repetition Meno, the pupil of Gorgias, so skillfully indulges in"—and the sequel of that.

But this leads also into conflict with the data. After all, Meno doubts of Gorgias's opinion regarding the teachability of virtue. Gorgias says virtue is not teachable. The sophists proper, especially Protagoras, say it is teachable, and Meno does not know [which of them is correct]. And this[82] explains why he approaches Socrates. This whole complex, which is neglected by Klein, [83]belongs to the same context and the same defect of his interpretation.[84] [Whether] Meno's answers are merely verbal repetitions of somebody else's utterances, as Klein says, is very hard to say. After all, Meno is convinced that virtue consists in being able to rule in contradistinction to justice and such things. That is not a merely verbal repetition. Furthermore, regarding the total incapacity for learning in the dialogue, presented by the fact that the slave, a poor boy, is capable of learning—but had not Meno [already] learned what the slave is now learning before our eyes, namely, these simple geometrical things? Is Meno more incapable of learning than, say, Crito, Socrates's old friend? Or Callicles? Before this investigation has been made, I would hesitate to say that Meno is a man outstanding because of his particular incapacity to learn. I do not think that one can explain Meno's arch-villainy by his incapacity to learn. He is surely unwilling to learn, but most people are unless it is so closely connected with their so-called material interest, and then men are willing to do all kinds of things.

[liii] Klein gives the Stephanus number: (519a3).
[liv] Klein, 188.

And let me turn[85] [to what Klein says] on page 200, in the second paragraph. "It is hardly possible not to draw the conclusion that the reputed villainy of Meno the Thessalian is but an outward manifestation of his now revealed *amathia*," his incapacity to learn. But incapacity to learn does not lead in all cases to arch-villainy. Or if incapacity to learn should, taken by itself,[86] always lead to arch-villainy, in most cases this development is held back or prevented by certain factors which are absent in the case of Meno: for example, a good upbringing (and Meno was brought up in that notoriously lawless land, Thessaly) and intercourse with gentlemen (whereas Meno's intercourse was with Gorgias). This is of course equally important. On page 201.

> Meno's case shows that ignorance is not a "vacuum": what provides "color" to Meno's depravity and "fills" his ignorance are all the opinions[lv] *doxai* accumulated on his "surface" memory.[lvi]

"Surface"—there is no depth, and therefore "surface." But again, Meno's memory is selective. He forgets justice. And finally, on page 201,[87] Klein raises here the question:

> Since we perceive Meno now as he is, we can also tell whether he is "beautiful, or wealthy, or again highborn, or else the reverse of these." Beautiful as Meno's body might appear, the deficiency of his soul makes him ugly. Timaeus, for one, goes into detail to explain[lvii] that the due relation (*symmetria*) of soul to body is all-important and that too imposing a body which carries but a small and feeble mind[lviii] robs the "whole living being"[lix] of all beauty, makes what pertains to the soul dull[lx], slow at learning, forgetful"[lxi] [and so on—LS].[lxii]

Ya, but this is what Timaeus says. Can we apply this to Meno? Is Meno of an evil mind and forgetful? I believe what was said before is that he was a shrewd fellow, not a feeble mind. This will not do. We have to reconsider then the assertion that Meno is an arch-villain. This assertion is based on Xenophon's *Anabasis* and on certain Platonic dialogues which do not deal with Meno but which deal with the problem of villainy or vice in general. Now this question of what kind of fellow Meno is, in whom we would not have the slightest interest if he were not a character of Plato—the relevance of this question is clear, because the *Meno* is the dialogue on virtue with a man of a singularly bad reputation. So if we want to understand the *Meno* we must see what kind of a man this man of a singularly bad reputation is. To what extent is his reputation borne out by what we see or hear in the dialogue? Meno forgets justice, and that indeed is a very bad sign. To express it in our language: If someone forgets his duty all the time, then we

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[lv] Klein gives only the Greek *doxai*.
[lvi] Klein, 201.
[lvii] Klein gives the Stephanus numbers: (87c-88b).
[lviii] Klein gives the Greek: (*dianoia*).
[lix] Klein gives the Greek: (*holon to zōion*)
[lx] Klein gives the Greek: (*kōphon*).
[lxi] Klein gives the Greek of each of these three adjectives: (*kōphon*) (*dusmathes*) (*amnēmon*).
[lxii] Klein, 201-02.

know what kind of a fellow he is. But when reminded of justice he admits immediately that justice is of course a virtue, i.e., something good. Contrast this with the attack on justice by people like Glaucon and Callicles, noble characters fundamentally who, precisely because they are noble, can decently state the case against justice. A[88] morally low individual will not attack justice for the simple reason because it is to his interest to have as many potential dupes around as possible. In the dialogue, Meno reveals a clear proclivity to vice; there can be no doubt about that. But this proclivity is not the same as the later actuality, as we find it described by[89] [Xenophon]. Is that actuality—Meno as an unbelievably vicious fellow—is that actuality the inevitable result or end of his proclivity, or is the conversation with Socrates and with Anytus in any way responsible for the actualization of that proclivity? In the latter case, the Meno of the dialogue is not yet an arch-villain, and this must be considered.

Now what does Socrates do? I don't ask what Anytus does, because that is a matter of mere speculation. But what does Socrates do which might account for the actualization of that proclivity? Socrates destroys the authority of highly-respected people. Think only of Pericles, whom no one in his senses would call an arch-villain. More than that, Socrates questions the opinions of others regarding virtue, opinions which Meno had adopted. But he questioned them, not because they are silent on justice, or not only because they are silent on justice but also because they are opinions, and more particularly, the opinions of others: let us say traditional opinions. He therefore questions in fact also the noble or decent traditional opinions *qua* traditional opinions. He counteracts this to some extent by denying half-heartedly that virtue going with knowledge is possible, and[90] by asserting that virtue can ultimately only be based on correct opinion and therefore in particular on correct traditional opinions. Therefore, if we pay proper attention to this fact and if we look at the situation in the dialogue, one can very well[91] understand that Anytus—and not merely Anytus—would feel that Socrates corrupts Meno, just as he was accused of corrupting the young in general.

Now by selecting for the dialogue on virtue an interlocutor who follows only bad traditions, Plato conceals the fact that Socrates questions all traditions. In order to know whether Meno is an arch-villain, one would have to know what villainy, vice is, and hence in the first place what virtue is.[92] And of course we have not been given an answer, and therefore we can say we are not able to judge yet. That goes a bit too far. Virtue appeared to be linked up with *mathēsis*, with learning. Meno is unable to learn in the strict sense of the word, and therefore we can say he is an arch-villain. Yet, again, many people are unable to learn in the strict sense without being arch-villains. Yes, but Meno is clever, and[93] most of the people who are unable and unwilling to learn are not clever. But a man like Themistocles was surely much cleverer than Meno, and he also betrayed the Greeks to the Persian king, so is Meno only a smaller version of Themistocles? Meno is a memory man according to Klein, but most people are memory men. Yet many people remember also good opinions, just opinions. Generally stated, memory as such has no principle favoring the just opinions in contradistinction to the unjust ones, but this does not prevent many people from remembering the just opinions and from acting on them. Meno may not be able to learn, and I think one can say that, we can assume that; but he proves to be persuadable by Socrates. Therefore he is superior to Anytus, who would

never listen to Socrates, and could one not then say that not Meno but Anytus is the arch-villain? Meno eventually listens to Socrates; we have seen he is very docile in the last part. Anytus never listens. Or could Anytus be less a villain than Meno? That is a hard suggestion.

The dialogue ends with pointing to a possible good deed of Meno, which we must contrast with Anytus's black deed, the destruction of Socrates. Anytus surely had low motives, from all we hear about him in Xenophon and elsewhere. Yet Anytus acted on behalf of the law, the law which said that one must respect the gods of the city, on [behalf of] something to which Meno is utterly indifferent. Now that brings us then to the great question of Socrates's guilt or innocence in the sense of the charge. If Socrates was guilty in the sense of the law, we cannot simply condemn Anytus despite his bad motives, because the law must be maintained.

Now this whole question of the gods of the *polis* is intimated in the *Meno*, but only intimated. For example, in the distinction between living as piously as possible and learning in the passage on recollection to which we have referred, we can state this as follows: There are two ways in which villainy can be avoided. The one is piety, and the other is philosophy. Hence Meno is an arch-villain because, apart from his inability to dedicate his life to philosophy, he is also unable to live in obedience to the traditions and to the traditional gods.

We'll leave it at this point, and next time[94] I will conclude this discussion and[95] give a survey of the dialogue as a whole, and then we may have some time for a free-for-all.

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[1] Deleted "And since I cannot assume that you will remember it…I see here…I'm sorry. I see here a note which I wanted to say at the beginning. Let me…Forgive me…This…I have some [inaudible words]."
[2] Deleted "case…the."
[3] Deleted "perhaps this was."
[4] Deleted "that."
[5] Deleted "was…."
[6] Deleted "each part."
[7] Deleted "beginning of the seventh."
[8] Deleted "Now there is…for… strangely, Plato calls this dimension, the dimension of sense perception, he also calls this sphere
[9] Deleted "there is"
[10] Deleted "sense, in an."
[11] Deleted "…will remember."
[12] Deleted "That consists… His."
[13] Deleted "Fulfills this…."
[14] Deleted "is unable…."
[15] Deleted "Our thinking activity, which Socrates at this point…calls by its generic name—*noēsis*, fulfills this task."
[16] Deleted "becomes clear…."
[17] Deleted "…that is."
[18] Deleted "As…."
[19] Deleted "forgetting." Moved "that these are numbers of." Deleted "that."
[20] Deleted "Our thinking…."
[21] Deleted "the"
[22] Deleted "invisible…of."

[23] Deleted "[inaudible word], color following …color is that…no, figure is that which follows color. No, I am sorry."
[24] Deleted "the first…."
[25] Deleted "is…."
[26] Deleted "the…."
[27] Deleted "visible"
[28] Deleted "this…."
[29] Deleted "Now."
[30] Deleted "but is connected in both dialogues."
[31] Deleted "…does any one of you."
[32] Deleted "Athens, of."
[33] Deleted "..on…there are a few…."
[34] Deleted "on the…."
[35] Deleted "…I mean."
[36] Deleted "every speech."
[37] Deleted "Recollection." Moved "to remind you of the connection."
[38] Deleted "recollection"
[39] Deleted "way…a unique."
[40] Deleted "this."
[41] Deleted "Now…."
[42] Deleted "There is a point…so…yes."
[43] Deleted "all-labouring task of knowing himself…."
[44] Deleted "starting"
[45] Deleted "And apply it to myself."
[46] Deleted "this"
[47] Deleted "hence." Moved "learning." Deleted "is possible."
[48] Deleted "in olden times, seven boys and seven girls"
[49] Deleted "and."
[50] Changed from "Now what…according to Klein's interpretation what happens in the *Phaedo* is the true myth, namely, a new Theseus, a new founder of Athens, kills the true Minotaurus, and that true Minotaurus is death."
[51] Deleted "describing that a doctrine…of."
[52] Deleted "…his."
[53] Deleted "death, his."
[54] Deleted "you see." Changed from "I mean you only have to…When Plato discusses for example…when he discusses Providence…I mean reward and punishment for badness or goodness, say in the second book of the *Laws,* there is no reference in that to any mythical."
[55] Deleted "And when you speak…."
[56] Deleted "only those."
[57] Deleted "this." Moved "short." Deleted "passage."
[58] Deleted "a myth it is understood that it's…in."
[59] Deleted "the…whereas in the case of the myth…."
[60] Deleted "only…no, what he says…He doesn't…He."
[61] Deleted "but."
[62] Deleted "by"
[63] Deleted "there is a skin."
[64] Deleted "no, that is not sufficiently…."
[65] Deleted "according to which…."
[66] Deleted "of the."
[67] Deleted "translation."
[68] Deleted "of."
[69] Deleted "made itself."
[70] Changed from "But the continuation of my question is that it seems to me that in your criticism of Klein for not see the…raising the question of the distinction between Plato's exoteric teaching and his mythical teaching…."

LS; Well, my…Yes?

that in so far as we've read the dialogue this quarter in keeping with the kind of introduction that Klein wanted us to set forth as a way of reading Plato, that we wouldn't be able to say point blank this is Plato's exoteric teaching.

[71] Deleted "You have to…But I'm arguing on his basis."
[72] Deleted "the *Phaedo*."
[73] Deleted ", i.e., as meant…not…."
[74] Deleted "the myth is…of."
[75] Deleted "serious."
[76] Deleted "say."
[77] Deleted "why can they not."
[78] Deleted "and."
[79] Deleted "Klein also is not…."
[80] Deleted "Now…And then Klein…."
[81] Deleted "—and especially."
[82] Deleted "leads…and this is…."
[83] Deleted "is here"
[84] Deleted "That."
[85] Deleted "…we cannot…."
[86] Deleted "would."
[87] Deleted "he speaks…."
[88] Deleted "low…a."
[89] Deleted "Meno."
[90] Deleted "that virtue can ultimately…."
[91] Deleted "say…."
[92] Deleted "Virtue is…."
[93] Deleted "many people."
[94] Deleted "we will…."
[95] Deleted "I will."

Session 16: no date

Leo Strauss: I propose that I complete my discussion of Meno's arch-villainy, which I began last time, then give a brief survey of the dialogue, and then we will have our discussion, no holds barred. Now I begin at this point. Either Meno is not the arch-villain, for Anytus is worse than he—and a strong case can be made for that—or Meno is the arch-villain, that is to say, worse than Anytus. Then there will be an alternative to virtue connected with or based on knowledge, and this alternative will be piety. I remind you of the connection between [piety and] Anytus, however bad his motives were. He accuses Socrates of impiety, not worshiping the gods which the city worships, and therefore Anytus, however bad his motives are, stands for piety. I remind you in this connection[1] [of] the myth of recollection, where[2] a pious life is mentioned together with a life devoted to learning; and the relation between these two is wholly obscure, so that one may very well say that these are two different ways of life.

Now there is a link between this passage and the conclusion of the dialogue: the reference to the divine men, as they were called there, men who are virtuous by virtue of correct opinion and not of knowledge, and who have this privilege through divine allotment and not through any through any merit of their own.[3] [It] is clear at the end [that] there is a kind of virtue which does not go together with knowledge, and therefore Meno's inability to learn, his ineptitude regarding knowledge, is not a sufficient explanation of his villainy, because you can also avoid being a villain through piety. Now we may express the same difficulty as follows: Inability to learn, unwillingness to learn, *amathia* in Greek, is reduced by Klein to lack of depth—a shrunken soul, as he translates the Greek word, lack of a third dimension. And this lack of that would indeed be a sufficient explanation of villainy if every kind of decency were due to some kind of depth, to some insight—insight also written with a hyphen: in-sight, introspection. This is a possibility. Klein, however, does not show it. Now how could this depth thus understood be described in Platonic terms? I think[4] there can be no doubt about the answer: Love of the beautiful, love of the noble.[5] So in other words, we would understand why there can be people who are not dedicated to a life of learning and understanding and yet have noble aspirations and are in a way noble men: because this love of the beautiful is in them. Now it is clear that Meno lacks this love of the beautiful. When he brings up the beautiful in his third definition and Socrates immediately replaces the noble or beautiful—*kalon*—by the good, Meno is not even aware of this change, so little is he interested in the noble as noble. It is also safe to say that Anytus lacks this love of the noble.

What is an arch-villain in contradistinction to an ordinary villain? Perhaps a man who wishes to be admired on account of his very villainy, and who therefore believes that what is commonly called villainy is in fact virtue. He would therefore also admire villainy in others. At any rate, he would be concerned with virtue in this sense. Meno is doubtless concerned with virtue in this sense, as is shown by the fact that he hesitates to follow Gorgias regarding the teachability of virtue, and this also explains why he approaches Socrates, because he wants to find out from Socrates whether virtue is

teachable or not, i.e., whether Gorgias is right or Protagoras is right. Nevertheless, the mere fact that Meno just forgets justice as distinguished from attacking justice shows his pettiness. To that extent, I would agree with Klein.

Now this much in conclusion of the discussion we began last time, and now a brief survey of the dialogue. Now first let us remind ourselves again of the connection between the theme of the *Meno* and our immediate concern here and now. As social scientists, we must be very much concerned with the distinction between facts and values, and therefore in particular with the status of values or of value judgments. Now the question raised and discussed throughout the *Meno*, What is virtue?, is the question of the principle guiding all our value judgments. I mean, if you reduce the infinite variety of value judgments to their simple principle you always come back to the question: What is human excellence? What is virtue?[6] I do not [wish to be]labor that point. I think we should always remember it.

Now let me turn to the *Meno*, not going into any depth but starting from the obvious features. Now the first thing we observe when we open the book is that the *Meno* is a performed or dramatic dialogue. It looks like a drama.[7] [The names] of the characters [are] given at the beginning. It is not a narrated dialogue, like the *Protagoras*, for example, is a narrated dialogue, the *Republic* is a narrated dialogue. Now what is the relevance of this distinction between performed and narrated dialogues? Well, in a performed dialogue all characters, including Socrates, are as it were on the stage. They do not talk directly to you (in a deeper sense they do, but not in the most literal sense), whereas when Socrates narrates the conversation which he has, he speaks to the people to whom he narrates and therefore to us. In the *Republic*, for example, when he describes certain actions or sufferings of Thrasymachus, for example, Thrasymachus blushed, and Socrates makes clear [that it was] [8]not from sense of shame but because it was so hot. Obviously this could never occur in a dramatic dialogue, because it would be grossly insulting, and Socrates isn't a bad man.[9] Now if we apply this to the *Meno*: Socrates cannot tell us his opinion of Meno or of the moves which Meno made and even of the reasons why he, Socrates, made a certain move, [all of] which he could do in a narrated dialogue. He cannot tell us the prehistory, as it were, of the conversation. The dialogue can begin abruptly because it is a[10] performed dialogue and not a narrated dialogue. Then Socrates would have to say something [about] how[11] [it was that he] met Meno and perhaps make some remarks to the effect that Meno, without any provocation, shot at Socrates this question.

Now the second most obvious characteristic of the *Meno* is that it is a compulsory and not a voluntary dialogue. A compulsory dialogue [is] a dialogue imposed on Socrates; a voluntary dialogue [is] a dialogue which Socrates seeks. The *Meno* is clearly imposed on Socrates. Socrates does not seek a conversation with Meno on virtue. I believe that makes sense. Now the *Meno* is *the* dialogue on virtue with a man reputed to be particularly bad. Yet he is very bad in such a way that his badness or vice is compatible with his seeking a conversation with Socrates—his special kind of badness. Anytus, for example, is also bad, but his badness would never induce him to seek a conversation with Socrates.

Now what then, again, about Meno's badness or vice? Now this is explained in the dialogue by the reference to Thessaly, this country famous for its lawlessness, and also by the reference to Gorgias. After all, according to the general view—by no means a groundless view—and also through what we know from the *Gorgias*, Gorgias was a man who was not particularly concerned with justice. He was concerned with producing competent orators, clever orators, but justice, that was not his business. So the upbringing of Meno is not very good. But what about Meno's nature? Now Klein refers to this question when he speaks of the shrunken soul, of the lack of a third dimension. Now this importance of nature and of the specific nature is played down in the *Meno*, most drastically through the scene with the slave. The slave scene seems to show that everyone can learn if he has only a bit of good will, and the slave has this good will willy-nilly because he is told by his master to have the good will. So[12] if learning is so crucial regarding virtue, we can say [that] everyone can acquire true virtue. The variety of virtues, especially the difference between true virtue and vulgar virtue, is concealed.[13] When vulgar virtue is spoken of explicitly at the end, the virtue based on opinion only, then it is done on the premise that virtue based on knowledge—the true virtue—is impossible.

Now what about Meno's motivation[14] in approaching Socrates? Meno is a follower of Gorgias, as Socrates underlines very strongly, but Meno is not certain whether Gorgias is right as regards the teachability of virtue. Gorgias, you may recall, said virtue is not teachable, whereas the sophists in the narrower sense of the term regard virtue as teachable and claim to be teachers of virtue. But in spite of his being a follower of Gorgias, Meno is not sure whether he should follow Gorgias in this most important point, and this is a sufficient motivation for turning to another man of fame, like Socrates, and see[ing] whether he cannot act as an arbiter between Gorgias and the sophists proper.

Now almost at once, at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates raises the question: What is virtue? We have to know what virtue is before we can say whether it is teachable or not. Meno gives three answers, three different answers, but all of them have one fact in common. Meno is unable to find that one and single virtue through which all kinds of virtues are virtues. That is quite visible in the first answer where he enumerates *n* virtues—virtue of man, woman, slave, and so on—and doesn't give a simple answer, a single answer as to what virtue is. The second and third answers speak of only one virtue, but they are not applicable to other human beings. For example, virtue is the ability to rule, an ability notoriously absent from children and slaves; and[15] similar considerations apply to the third answer. The discussion of the second answer according to which virtue consists in the ability to rule leads then to a lengthy consideration of two kinds of answers to "what is" questions, of definitions. We have discussed that at some length. The third answer, the final answer of Meno leads to Meno's breakdown, his paralysis; and his first reaction is[16] [one] which is very human: he is angry at Socrates. He threatens him. But since Socrates tames him, he gives a reason which justifies his paralysis, a reason compatible with his self love—of course not that he is not able to answer, but [that] it can't be answered—and this reason is the *argos logos*: learning is impossible. We cannot seek[17] what we do not know. To which Socrates replies with his holy *logos*, according to which learning is possible because learning is recollection. Socrates "quote proves

unquote" the fact that learning is recollection by the exhibition of the slave's learning. Here[18] Socrates doesn't tell the slave anything; he only asks him questions. But by the proper[19] procedure in questioning, the slave produces out of himself, out of the treasure hidden within him, the answers. Now this proof of the possibility of learning is to enable Meno to come out with a proper answer, at least a tenable answer, a defensible answer to the question of what virtue is. But Meno does not produce such an answer. He says he would like to know first whether virtue is teachable, and let's forget, so to say, about what virtue is.

Now[20] Meno's reaction to the slave scene is not entirely unreasonable. In fact, it is to some extent justified by the slave scene. First, in the slave scene we have seen [that] a problem was solved without answering and even [without] raising the question, What is? Say, a triangle or whatever it may be. And secondly, which is equally important, the slave succeeded in answering the questions because he was guided to the answers by Socrates, and therefore Meno [21]can with some justice say: Why don't you do the same favor to me, a free man, which you did to that slave? Therefore Socrates is willing to discuss the question in the following way:[22] What kind of thing must virtue be if it is to be teachable? The answer: It[23] must be knowledge or like knowledge, otherwise it cannot be teachable. Now the question is: Is this possible? And a positive answer is given by an argument which leads to the result that virtue or its core is prudence, *phronēsis*. So[24] we know now, in a manner, that virtue is a kind of knowledge. But is it teachable? The difficulty[25] [is that] if it is teachable, there must be teachers of virtue. And here begins the scene with Anytus, who takes it for granted that every Athenian gentleman is of course a teacher of virtue, and especially these famous men who are mentioned there: Pericles, Themistocles, and so on. The result of this discussion, however, is that there are no teachers of virtue, and hence virtue is not teachable, and hence virtue is not a kind of knowledge. If there is to be virtue it must not be connected with knowledge—*epistēmē*, science—but with opinion: of course, with correct or true opinion, and this true opinion would accrue to men not by any effort or learning but by divine allotment. But is[26] this virtue going together with correct opinion possible if there is not in the background a virtue going together with knowledge? This question is alluded to toward the very end and it is therefore suggested that we can no longer avoid, [as we have done throughout the dialogue], answering the question: What is virtue?[27]

So the question, What is virtue?, which is the theme of the *Meno*, is not explicitly answered in the *Meno*. And we have made an experiment by[28] turning from the *Meno* for a short while to Plato's *Republic*, which is a much[29] longer dialogue than the *Meno*, but we have seen that in the *Republic* too the question of what virtue is [is] not sufficiently answered. And the reason is this: virtue means something like the right order of the soul. To know virtue [30]therefore presupposes knowledge of the nature of the soul, of its parts and of their order. And this knowledge is not sufficiently supplied by the *Republic*. Yet is not an answer to this question suggested in the *Meno*, although not presented, and still less proved? Virtue or its core is prudence, *phronesis*. Now *phronēsis* is something different from *epistēmē*, from knowledge or science, and the difference between these two forms of knowledge, practical wisdom or prudence on the one hand, science or knowledge on the other, is made very explicit in the sixth book of Aristotle's *Ethics*, to

which one necessarily must have recourse, as Klein does. And there is no reason to begin with for doubting that this is also a distinction accepted by Plato. Aristotle makes clear there that one can be a man of practical wisdom; one can be prudent without being a man of knowledge, of theoretical knowledge. And the example he gives is that [difference] between Pericles, a man of great prudence as the representative of practical wisdom, and Anaxagoras, a philosopher as a representative of knowledge or science.

Now let us restate the problem in the following terms. There is such a thing as wisdom, which is more comprehensive than science and which is directed above all toward the principles of the whole, whatever these principles may be. But practical wisdom, prudence, is not as such concerned with the principles of the whole. It is concerned with the human good, with happiness. This is, we can say, the background of the discussions of the *Meno*. But in the *Meno* the distinction between prudence and wisdom, or knowledge, is frequently blurred. We have observed that. And this must have a reason. Happiness, we can say, consists in understanding or in the quest for understanding the whole, in philosophizing, and prudence, or practical wisdom in the highest sense, would then be being well advised regarding the conditions of philosophizing. Take a simple example[31] from the life of Socrates. His marrying Xanthippe had nothing to do with his philosophic concerns, but[32] since philosophizing was that to which his life was dedicated, there must be a connection between his philosophizing and his marrying Xanthippe; and, as he states it (on the occasion of a banquet, I admit), he married her because he knew he had to live with human beings, and if he would marry the most difficult of all women and could control her, then he could live with all human beings and could control them.[i] So that is in a comical form a statement of the serious relation between prudence and wisdom.

But here is this difficulty. Prudence is directed toward happiness, and yet happiness consists in philosophizing—in wisdom, in knowledge. What is happiness? One must make a distinction between true happiness and imaginary happinesses. For example, the imaginary happiness of the miser, who is perfectly happy if he has hoarded treasures, and his subjective happiness may be greater than that of anybody else, and yet he lives in a fool's paradise. So true happiness would be something like the perfection of man, of the soul. But this would require, then, in order to be substantiated, knowledge of the soul, wisdom, *epistēmē*. That would mean however that prudence has wisdom as its basis. Prudence concerned with happiness cannot be certain of the end with which it is concerned, happiness, without theoretical knowledge. But if wisdom, full understanding, is not possible to man as Plato seems to assume, then it would seem to follow that prudence is not possible, because prudence presupposes the knowledge of the nature of the soul. In accordance with this, the dying Socrates, on the day of his death, in the *Phaedo*, when describing the life of the philosopher, says they have been striving for, longing for prudence, which means they did not possess it.[ii] *Phronēsis*, prudence, is knowledge of the human good, and hence knowledge of a part, because [the] human good is only a part of all possible subjects. Knowledge of a part is inevitably partial knowledge, inadequate knowledge, but even such partial knowledge would not be

[i] Xenophon, *Symposium* 2. 10.
[ii] Cf. *Phaedo* 67e4-68a3.

possible if the whole did not [33]consist of parts that are wholes. Human life with its end, happiness, is in a way a whole. The *polis* is such a whole. The happiness of which man is capable is such a whole. But all partial wholes have, as it were, openness to the whole simply, and therefore these difficulties which I have tried to circumscribe. So there remains some fundamental darkness in spite of the fact that an answer good enough for practical purposes is suggested in the *Meno*. Or differently stated, the ambiguities and blurrings of distinctions which occur all the time in the *Meno*, especially in the latter part, reflect a serious difficulty. So I will leave it at that now and then we have our discussion. And I believe that may be of some practical use to you, but this I am unable to explain.

Student: . . . Xanthippe in regard to the difference between prudence and wisdom.

LS: Ya. Wisdom—you know, *sapientia*, distinguished from *prudence*.

Student: It occurs to me that I can't see the—if Socrates's aim is philosophizing, why marry an obstacle to philosophizing for the sake of prudence? I am unclear.

LS: Yes. No, that is a very good question. It was discussed by Nietzsche in the third part of his *Genealogy of Morals*, where he gives an enumeration of the unmarried philosophers.[iii] I mean, in classical antiquity they were all unmarried, so to speak, but Socrates is the exception. And he said: Well, why did he marry? Answer: He did it ironically. [Laughter][34] Yes, that is a sound point Nietzsche made. I believe it is very hard to answer. I don't think that I could have an answer. But look at this: What is the peculiarity of Socrates among all great philosophers at first glance, if we disregard Xanthippe? What distinguishes him from all other great philosophers?

Student: Not writing anything.

LS: Pardon?

Student: Not writing anything.

LS: Exactly. He didn't write. Now could his not-writing and his marrying be connected with each other?

Student: He had never had time.

LS: Yes, you think of these people who marry long before they have their master's and they never finish their master's thesis. [Laughter] But that was not the situation at that time. Now what could it be? Well, here we have some Platonic evidence, although stated so generally that we have to subsume the fact of Socrates's life under the Platonic general statements, in Plato's *Banquet*.[35] The concern of man, *the* concern of man with happiness, is presented there as the desire for possessing the good always. Always. And there are three ways in which man can achieve that. I begin from the highest, contrary to the way in which it is presented there. The highest is to know the truth. If you know the truth, the

[iii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, part 3, section 7.

eternal truth, then you are linked with the eternal, and to that extent you have the good always. The second highest is immortal glory, or what men call immortal glory, that survives men. And the third and lowest is offspring, children, by which a man perpetuates himself also.

So now assuming (properly, I think) that procreation is not decently possible except through marriage, then it seems that Plato and Socrates divided the thing among themselves. Plato wrote but did not marry; Socrates married but did not write. Well, of course this must be taken intelligently, as I'm sure you will take it, but it is again an ironical statement. But surely Socrates must have had this as a firm principle of action: he will not write. And as far as I remember, there is a single case of Socrates's writing in Plato's or Xenophon's writings, in a discussion on justice in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, 4.4, [with] Hippias. And there they discuss various cases of justice and injustice, and in order to make it clear they draw up two parallel columns of just actions.[36] And then [Socrates] write[s] at the top of the one column a "J," that means justice, and an "I," [for] injustice. That's the only act of writing which I remember, and you see he did not even write out these two words. And the deeper and grave reasons for not writing were stated by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, where everyone can read them.[iv] So one can say, [37][to] state it more generally: the highest, the only true form of immortalizing oneself is learning, understanding. And of course that does no longer mean one as an individual, because the understander as understander is not Mr. X or Y [but] the intellect in him. Since this is not sufficient for man, [a] mortal being, there are[38] two alternatives open to him: writing, let us say; and procreation. And since writing is so dangerous to the understanding, as is developed in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates preferred marriage as a less dangerous thing. In addition, it[39] was thought to be a direct duty to the *polis*, of course. The *polis* doesn't expect its citizens to write; that happens only in our age [laughter] where the large *polis* demands publish or perish, but that was not the practice of olden times.

Student: Would you comment a little bit about the very last[v] part of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates does take to writing down, or translating Aesop's Fables, or something like that?

LS: Did he write them? No, he simply puts them into verse, if I remember that. But I do not remember now, I should look it up. You mean Aesop's verses?

Student: I forget; I know there was something that he was planning to do with Aesop, but—

LS: [40]I do not know it exactly now, but I believe he did not write them. He simply put them into verses, thus obeying a dream that he should exercise music, which he believed he had done throughout his life by philosophizing but now at the threshold of death he wanted to make doubly sure and said maybe it was meant literally, and so he would become a poet in prison for the last two weeks. And what he did was[41] of course not [to

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[iv] *Phaedrus* 257d4-279c8.

[v] The student should have said "first part," as the passage occurs near the beginning, in 60c8ff. The Loeb translation employs the word "write," but this is seriously misleading, since Socrates describes his own activity only with the verb *poieō* and its derivatives.

write] a tragedy nor a comedy, but to take the fables of Aesop and put them into verse. Ya. Well, we have to follow an order. Yes?

Student: You've commented today on the reasons why, as far as informing the reader of something, the degeneration at the end, where things become more confused. But would you elaborate on the dramatic reason vis-a-vis Meno that Socrates lets things slide at the end?

LS: You mean after a kind of peak was reached, and then he seems to suggest that another kind of virtue—that we don't need *epistēmē*, we don't need knowledge; correct opinion is sufficient.

Same Student: And then even later about right opinion, after he proves that knowledge is better than right opinion, he says: Well, let's forget about that.

LS: Well, what is the general reason, [as] I believe I stated in my survey?

Same Student: But vis-a-vis Meno, you stated as far as what it teaches us about the darkness at the center. But what about in the dramatic relation to Meno?

LS:[42] Well, you can say since Meno is not teachable strictly speaking—I mean, he is as teachable as the slave, because Meno has learned some geometry (as we know, and as appears from the exchange with Socrates) but in the highest sense he is not teachable. Now therefore the question is: What shall happen to our poor Meno? Must there not be a kind of virtue open to people who cannot learn strictly speaking? That [question] must be answered. This is good enough up to a point, but then when Socrates develops it and says: Yes, this kind of virtue based on correct opinion accrues to men by divine allotment. That is to say, you cannot do anything to get it, and then this difficulty arises which we have discussed earlier: What happens to the non-privileged men? And Meno surely belongs to the non-privileged men, and that leads to very grave difficulties indeed, which we have discussed at the time. One explanation is that the case of Meno is hopeless, that he is fit only for extermination; and since one cannot exterminate people because they are born crooks, so to speak, or born murderers or traitors,[43] for reasons which I don't have to explain to you, one has to wait until they commit a dastardly crime. And that is exactly what happened: when he betrayed his fellow Greeks in Asia Minor, the Persian king, this guardian of justice, had him executed in a particularly cruel but perfectly deserved way. At least that was the legend; I can only repeat that. Yes?

Student: I'm concerned with the place of the gods in this dialogue and the whole scheme. There are three places where it seems to me that Socrates refers to them; one very briefly where he says to Meno [that] they disagree, and Socrates says: If you wait to be initiated into the mysteries, then I think you would agree with me. Maybe he's just saying, "if I could talk to you that long," but maybe he is saying that there is something good about the mysteries that will help you out.

LS: Yes, yes, but I would say the more obvious meaning is that the initiation which Meno should undergo would be initiation into philosophy, but this he will not—

Same Student: Then the mysteries that he is talking about, you would think perhaps are philosophy?

LS: Yes, but you see in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, which—you know, that is a comic presentation of Socrates. Socrates is presented there as initiating his pupils into the worship of his gods—the clouds, especially—and so this is also there in the background. But in the highest sense I think it would mean the initiation into philosophy.

Same Student: The other two places were of course the height of the dialogue, where he presents the myth which has been told to him by priests and priestesses, he says.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And then at the end where he presents virtue as a gift of the gods. But somehow in our culture at least for a long time it was thought that the highest things we had were those which were gifts of God. Socrates however seems to think that the gift of God is somehow lower; that is, it is only based on opinion—

LS: [44]Ya, well that is a grave question, and that's one reason why Anytus is here. Did Socrates believe in the gods worshiped by the city of Athens? . . . Now in order to answer that question one would have to read, in the first place, Socrates's own defense against the charge, you know, the most official document, and also Xenophon's parallel to that in the beginning of the *Memorabilia*. I hope I will be able to do that in the fall quarter.[vi] Now if I may make a mere assertion which I cannot now prove, I would say Socrates did not believe in the gods worshiped by the city of Athens, and he doesn't even make an attempt to prove that he did believe in them. He only shows, in[45] Plato's *Apology*, the self-contradiction of Meletus. Meletus[46] had said in the charge: Socrates doesn't believe in the gods which the city worships but introduces or imports other divinities that are new. And now Socrates asks that great fool Meletus: Do you mean that I do not believe in the gods worshiped by the city, or do you say I don't believe in any gods? And then Meletus of course, in order to aggravate the charge, says: You don't believe in any gods. And then Socrates says: Look here, you say I introduce new divinities—and[47] that is the word *daimonion* in Greek. Now what is a *daimon*, a demon, in contradistinction to a god proper? Answer: that is a being generated by gods but not [itself] a god; that is to say, for example, by the intercourse of gods and men. And now if I believe in *daimonia*, who are descendants from gods, as you admit in your very charge, then I believe in gods. That's the whole refutation of this crucial part of the charge. And in Xenophon the situation is slightly different, but fundamentally the same. So now what is that? Repeat your question now.

[vi] In the autumn of 1966 Strauss taught a course on Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* which addressed works of Xenophon in the last two sessions.

Same Student: My question was essentially the position of the gods, and what was Socrates's belief about the gods, because they play a big part in this dialogue, and—

LS: [48]It depends what gods are. If you mean by gods Zeus, Hera, and so on, I think one can say Socrates didn't believe in them. There is a distinction made in Plato's *Timaeus* (where Socrates is not the speaker but Timaeus is the speaker) between the gods who reveal themselves whenever they choose—and these are Zeus and the others—and the gods who regularly, periodically, so to speak reveal themselves in an ordered fashion. And these are the heavenly bodies, or rather the souls moving the heavenly bodies. Gods in this sense Socrates and Plato surely acknowledged. Now that of course[49] doesn't settle the question in any way, because there is the *Timaeus* itself, where the world is presented as made by a *demiourgos*, by a cosmic artisan; and this reminded people throughout the ages of the biblical creation, although of course it is not a creation out of nothing there. But then the question is: To what extent does the presentation of the universe as made, fabricated, created by such a divine artisan, to what extent is this meant to be a teaching literally true and not rather a plausible myth, as Timaeus himself calls it? These are long questions. But in this, if we limit ourselves to the *Meno* it is clear. There is an alternative suggested.[50] In the recollection passage—in the myth, as it is ordinarily called—two conclusions are drawn from the recollection thesis or the immortality thesis: a) live as piously as possible; b) devote your life to learning, to understanding. The relation between these two things is in no way made clear in this passage. They may be ultimately identical; they may be exclusive, mutually exclusive, for all we know. Some greater clarity is supplied by the end of the dialogue when he brings in the two kinds of virtue, the one based on knowledge and the other based on correct opinion, and the one based on correct opinion is[51] traced to divine allotment. And here they seem to be mutually exclusive, at least in this sense: that the virtue going together with knowledge is higher in rank than the virtue going together with mere opinion, however correct.

I mean, these are very long stories. You must not forget that from rather early times, a few centuries after Plato—and the same applies to Aristotle in a different way—they were read in the light of the Bible. I mean, it was always understood—read only Augustine—that they were pagans. But Plato especially could be understood, as it was by one of the Greek fathers, as a *paidagogos*, a pedagogue toward Christ, i.e., that of the philosophers who comes closest to the Christian teaching. And the same was done also by Jews, to read, to understand the great philosophers, at least Plato and Aristotle, as somehow kindred to the Bible. But of course this is not baseless; I mean, there is something true there. But it becomes a simple untruth if the radical difference between Jerusalem and Athens is not realized at the same time, because the ordinary form in which one can effect such a reconciliation is to say that there is a sphere of nature or reason, and then there is a higher sphere of super-nature, or super-reason. Ya? And that[52] higher sphere is the sphere of revelation. But is this compatible with Plato and Aristotle? It is a correction of Plato and Aristotle against Plato and Aristotle, and it is justifiable as such, but it is surely no longer—differently stated, there is philosophy, autonomous philosophy as the Greeks developed it, and there is theology. And according to the biblical tradition, philosophy is at best a handmaid of theology, a handmaid which has autonomy in her sphere but nevertheless is in need of supplementation, of crucial

supplementation. The philosophers deny that, that philosophy is subject to theology and they would of course say that it is rather the other way around: theology must be subject to philosophy. As it was even stated long after these crucial discussions[53] by Kant at the end of the Enlightenment: according to the then-organization of the universities, the philosophic faculty was called the lower faculty, and the theology, medicine, and jurisprudence [faculties] were the higher—but especially of course in relation to theology. And Kant, referring to this saying that philosophy is the maid of theology said, and that shows you the delicacy of this problem: She is a maid, all right, but the question [is] whether she carries the tail—or how do you call that?

Student: The train.

LS: The train—the train of theology, and goes after her, or whether she carries the candle in front of her. And I think this controversy exists up to the present day and will exist as long as there will be thinking beings. Yes?

Student: I understand your conclusion to be that even if prudence is only knowledge of a part that it wouldn't be possible to have prudence unless it's possible to have some knowledge of these parts as though they were wholes in themselves, meaning that we can never have knowledge of any part unless we have knowledge of the whole.

LS: Well, take the case of Socrates, as we see him not only in the *Meno* but also elsewhere. Socrates has no doubt that the highest human pursuit is philosophizing, and this is the answer to the question of what constitutes human happiness. I mean, that is clear, that you need also other goods, like health and so on, and you mustn't starve[54]. But these are only ministerial things and subordinate; therefore the order of rank—that is a key question—that is settled for him. Now to the full understanding of this fact which Socrates proves in his way, inductively—for example, he looks around and takes the greatest statesmen; you see in this dialogue he states it in the crudest and most provocative manner[55], what he says about Themistocles and the others. But he looks at them and says, stated here without any provocation: These men all make certain premises, assumptions on which their noblest actions are based, but[56] do they truly understand? Did they give sufficient thought to these premises by which their whole noble and justly praised activity stands and falls?

So in other words, every other pursuit lacks that concern with self-knowledge, with understanding oneself which philosophy—proper philosophy—has, and the same of course applies to the poets as well. You know? I mean the poets, which is a much more serious matter for Plato than the statesmen. I mean, after all, was not Homer a very wise man? And yet[57] Plato asserts, again with very provocative language, that the poets are very low people, even Homer: tenth book of the *Republic,* which you remember. Again, that must be properly stated in order to see what he means.[58] That would lead too far, to state the Platonic doctrine of why poetry is a lower kind of wisdom than philosophy, but I believe part of it will also be this: that the kind of wisdom which the poets possess has to do with human life, with the human soul, and not with the whole of which the human soul is a part; and therefore, however profound it may be, it is fundamentally inadequate.

Same Student: The thing that comes to my mind about that is that there are two questions. One is that wisdom is not really wisdom; at the best, it's sound opinion or true opinion. Is that correct?[59] That at the best the wisdom that the *polis* has of human actions is not wisdom but only true opinion.

LS: [Sure, this is true with regard to] the *polis*.[60] Ya, sure. Well, Plato indicates that at the beginning of the simile of the cave. You know, there is a kind of small wall outside of the cave, shutting off the cave from the outside world, and what the people in the cave see are artifacts, shadows of artifacts, carried around[61] by men who are not visible, because the artifacts which they carry, they alone are visible. That is the situation of the *polis*. The *polis* lives on opinions, on artifacts. Not that the opinions are mere artifacts; there is no opinion which does not have a basis in the truth, which is not a kind of fragment of the truth. But that this fragment is absolutized so that its referring to the other fragments is arbitrarily cut off, that [is what] makes it an artifact.

Same Student: The other part of that was, how does that apply today, when we don't have a *polis* or anything which could present such a coherent model or image?

LS: But the question is: Do we not have today also authoritative opinions?

Same Student: Authoritative but partial opinions.

LS: Ya, well, that is implied by authoritative. All right. [62]The key point which Plato, and not only Plato, makes is this: No society is possible without authoritative opinions. And there are quite a few people today who say there are no longer authoritative opinions, and they [63][say] the end of ideology has come. But are not, for example, the decisions of the Supreme Court, which have had such a tremendous impact, do they not hang together somehow, do they not form altogether a web of authoritative opinions?[64] Now of course theoretically there is the possibility, and a very interesting possibility, that the authoritative opinions governing a society are authoritative opinions only for children or other immature people, who might be the majority of the society but [who] would be in themselves studied by intelligent and properly prepared men—[is there not the possibility that those opinions] would be the truth? Is this not thinkable, at least, that such a society would be the rational society when the authoritative opinions are identical with the dictates of reason? Now what Plato denies, and I think denies by the very fact that his seemingly most perfect republic requires the noble lie, [65][is] the possibility of a rational society.

And what we are concerned with today is this: that the most respected, the most awe-inspiring authority, intellectual authority, is social science.[66] I disregard natural science or mathematics because they don't claim to deal with these matters. And surely the English departments, interpreting Shakespeare or other English poets, could not possibly claim that they deal with this[67] grave subject. Now what[68] is the line of our social science? You all know it: authoritative opinions would be value judgments. Because the others are uninteresting—I mean, the merely factual statements, they are practically very useful but

they don't give guidance regarding good and bad, just and unjust.[69] And value judgments are irrational, emotional, and so on. So that means, in other words, that in a different way Plato is right: you cannot have a rational society.[70] Some people would perhaps say a rational society is a society in which social science[71] guides the government regarding the means for the ends which the government or the electorate pursues. But this is of course a very limited rationality, because the rationality of the ends, of the values, is beyond the control of human reason. That is I think one of the most striking differences between not only present-day social science but political philosophy in modern times altogether: [that it] believes in the possibility of a rational society, and Plato and Aristotle we can say do not believe in that. Plato surely does not believe in that. And in this respect of course there is an agreement between theology and Plato, only there is no place for revelation in Plato. But a society based on revelation is by definition not a rational society. Yes?

Student: To this question of revelation, might not one argue that Socrates's continual reference to his *daimon* which tells him what to do, and the story he tells in the *Crito* about not going to arrest the man because the *daimon* told him not to, [and] that it always told him not to do something, might not that be a bow towards or admission of revelation?

LS: Well, that is again a long question, the *daimonion*, and this was frequently understood in this way. When I was a student I heard frequently the view that the *daimonion* is something like what we call the conscience, you know, that it goes in this direction. I don't believe that this is tenable. But this can surely not be settled on the basis of the *Meno*, where the *daimonion* is never mentioned. I said before that in my opinion the most revealing Platonic dialogue dealing with the *daimonion* is the *Theages* (T-h-e-a-g-e-s), but almost all my contemporaries will laugh at me because it is today settled that this is a spurious dialogue. I believe the grounds are very poor, but what can we do? But I think the other dialogues also would[72] lead one to a similar result.[73] There is one passage in the *Republic* which I find very striking, when they discuss marriage (and you know what they do with marriage in the *Republic*; it is more or less like [the] breeding of horses and dogs, you know, they are put together from a strictly eugenic point of view), and then in this connection Socrates says occasionally the most useful marriage, meaning regarding offspring, regarding the city, will be for us that holy or sacred marriage.[vii] The sacred and holy [are] replaced by the useful. That is a very important Platonic utterance.

And the Aristotelian statement at the beginning of the *Politics*, the proof of the natural character of the *polis* (you know, at the very beginning) also means that the *polis* is natural; it is not holy. When Homer speaks of Troy[74], [he calls it] holy Troy. You find in all textbooks today that the *polis* was at the same time state and church. I suppose you have learned this in high school. It is inadequately expressed, but there is of course an element of truth in it. The *polis* is something sacred; therefore the gods of the *polis* and the official worship of the gods by the *polis*. When Aristotle says the *polis* is natural, he also means it is not sacred; and all sacredness, which he recognizes in a subordinate place of course, is subordinate to the naturalness of the *polis*. In another passage in the *Politics* where Aristotle speaks of the functions which have to be fulfilled in every city, and he

[vii] E.g., *Republic* 458c6-459e3.

enumerates them—say, you must have cultivators of the soil, you must have artisans, and finally you must also have government and judges—then when he comes to number five in his enumeration, he says: fifth and first the worship of the gods.[viii] Now that is very revealing.[75] According to its intrinsic claim, the worship of the gods is of course meant to be the first or the highest, but according to Aristotle's judgment about it, it is not the first, but one among a number. And to take another sign of the same thing: one of the recognized virtues as we see from Plato and from the poets is of course piety, worship of the gods by sacrifice and prayer, especially prayer. In Aristotle's *Ethics* all virtues are discussed except piety. That is not a virtue in his sense, and the reason is—I mean, to state it very simply—that the true worship of the gods would be knowledge of them, and not prayers and sacrifice. No, no, I think one must not conceal this profound difference and must face it. Mr. Dry was first, and then Mr. Burnam.

Mr. Dry: My question is about the connection between who is the arch-villain and what is the best life. Is that connection due to the fact that one challenges or can threaten one way of life, whereas the other one can't challenge or threaten the other? That is, it's Meno that is a challenge to the way of life of the city because he's not a just man, but it's Anytus who is a challenge to the way of life of Socrates. He's pious, but in the name of his kind of piety he can challenge Socrates, and in challenging Socrates challenge the life of the philosopher.

LS: I understood a considerable part of what you said but not the whole, and therefore I do not understand the purport of your question.

Mr. Dry: I wanted to understand what the connection was between who is the arch-villain and what is the best life. Is the connection one man's being a threat in principle to one and not the other?

LS: Oh, I see. Yes, I see. The point which I had made [was] that we cannot settle the question of whether Meno is the arch-villain without taking into consideration Anytus, and Anytus is from one point of view surely inferior to Meno. I mean, Socrates could never say to Anytus: Try to persuade Meno to be nice. But he could say and did say to Meno: Try to persuade Anytus. But I said this doesn't entirely settle the question, because however low the motives of Anytus's persecuting Socrates may have been, he defended a law, and in fact much more than a law. And[76] there is nothing respectable of this kind on the side of Meno. I mean, Meno, whatever he may do, will be guided by his selfish concern with promoting himself. Anytus may also be concerned with it, but willy-nilly, so to say, he must become a defender of the traditional Athenian order. I didn't answer your question because I didn't understand it.

Mr. Dry: On that basis, I don't see the connection between the two questions, because it would seem then that no matter which life is the highest, somehow Anytus has a little more to be said for him than Meno in that he would stick to the laws of the city. In other words, if there is a connection, I wanted to see where one life might be best—

[viii] Aristotle, *Politics*, book 7, 1328b2 *ff*.

LS: No, that is not so simple. No, let us assume that the decision is unequivocably in favor of the philosophic life, of life devoted to learning. Then Meno, who can be persuaded by Socrates, is slightly higher than Anytus. But if the piety, a pious life has a claim comparable to that of philosophy, then the situation would be the opposite. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: My question is similar. I was wondering, do you think that Anytus could possibly be taken to represent a peak of the life of the *polis*?

LS: No.

Mr. Burnam: I mean, he doesn't seem to be either particularly pious on the one hand, or to have any connection with philosophy or with—

LS: Oh, surely no.[77] No, no, he was a rather despicable fellow, and I think he did not even have that kind of glamour which Cleon had a generation before—Cleon, who after all did this extraordinary thing in Philus, you know. Anytus was I think a rather poor politician, but he acquired immortal fame or infamy by the persecution of Socrates.

Mr. Burnam: Well, then could you say that a serious alternative to philosophy is not developed in the dialogue—piety as a serious—?

LS: Well, I would say that from Plato's point of view there is no alternative to philosophy. I mean, the only question is to what extent can you describe philosophy itself as true piety. That's a possibility. That is a question.[78] But [philosophy as such] would have nothing to do with sacrificing and prayers, unless you take such an unorthodox prayer as that at the end of the *Phaedrus* as proof that that belongs to philosophy. Did you want to say something?

Ms. Zuckert: Mr. Strauss, what does Meno's lack of a sense of humor have to do with this dialogue?

LS: Well, sense of humor is of course a very English word, as you know; and although it is frequently used when people speak of Greeks, it is dangerous. What I said was that he never laughs. Now what laughing means in Plato is a very long question. For example, Glaucon loves to laugh; and Adeimantus, if I remember well, never laughs, you know? And Crito of course never laughs. Laughing is in itself a sign of a kind of animal gaity. And therefore Cephalus laughs, [which is] very important. Yes. Now laughing, it can have something to do with a kind of inner freedom. It can have to do with the beautiful, with the love of the beautiful. That I think is what, to come back to the *Meno*: Meno is a man concerned with getting rich and powerful. Perhaps he is obsessed with it. And such people, to use our language, don't have a sense of humor. We can see this every day. They can make jokes, especially if making jokes is profitable to them, but[79] that's an obsession. And this would be a tentative explanation. But you must not forget, throughout this course I have been trying to find my way, to fumble my way in a great thicket, and I noticed this fact among others, that he was not laughing. It is perhaps unimportant. One

would have to have complete statistics, which I do not have, of who laughs when, and that would permit one to answer.[80]

To take another example of these little things which one can so easily overlook: regarding oaths, I have not a complete statistic of the Platonic dialogues, but at least of [the oaths of] Xenophon's Socratic writings and of some Platonic dialogues, [and] [81]I can speak of them with greater confidence. But[82] I noted the fact [that Meno never laughs] because I think it is always important in a Platonic dialogue to see what ain't there. You know the famous strategic principle: Hit them where they ain't. What ain't there is as important as what is there. [83]You have to know [of] the presence or absence of what is important. Now I notice to my great satisfaction that *nomos* and all its derivatives are absent from the *Meno*, unless I have over looked something; I cannot swear to that. And that would be characteristic, of course, because in the parallel dialogues, which I looked up from this point of view, *nomos* and its derivatives do occur. Yes, there was one more question.

Student: I was thinking of that same matter. *Nomos*—you mention that it was absent in all its derivations from the dialogue the *Meno*. I was wondering—

LS: I meant also *nomizo*, which can be translated by "I believe." I mean not necessarily in a religious sense, of course. The two other words, *oimai* and *hegeomai,*[ix] occur all the time, but *nomizo* never. Yes?

Same Student: But it seems to me that the last part of the dialogue does concern prudence a great deal, and there is also a mention of piety, and often, laws often—

LS: There is no mention of piety in the latter part. You remember when Socrates introduces Meno to Anytus, when he enumerates the parts of virtue with which Meno is concerned, he mentions worshipping parents, respecting them, but does not mention worshipping the gods.

Same Student: [84]You said that each of the Platonic dialogues has an abstraction from something which is very important to the subject matter.

LS: Yes, that is my experience.

Same Student: Now I was curious how we would begin to explain the absence of the abstraction from *nomos* in a discussion about virtue with an unvirtuous man for whom law must guide him—

LS: Ya, but I discussed that, and I said a simple explanation would be that of all things in the world, law would be the last which could restrain Meno. You know, I mean that is out for him. Of course, if he would be subject to a severe ruler, then he might behave, but law with its ordinary slow procedures could not keep back Meno. It is surely a fact which I think one must consider; how important it is altogether, that's another matter. But you must not overestimate—and I say this also for Mrs. Zuckert—you must not overestimate

[ix] "To suppose" and "to consider," both of which are synonyms of *nomizo*.

my understanding. I have also to grope quite a bit. And even this rule to which you refer, that Plato always abstracts from something, this I have established on the basis of a few dialogues. That was a time when I had no notion, but when I read, say, about twenty years ago or fifteen years ago, the *Euthyphro*, the dialogue on piety, and I observed by a very strange occurrence somewhere[85] [in the dialogue] that the word soul never occurs in the *Euthyphro*. I mean Plato as it were underlines it that he avoids the word soul. And then I went through the whole dialogue, saw [that] the word never occurs there, and then I thought about that: Would not the whole problem of piety as presented there look differently if the soul were properly considered? That seemed to me, and then I observed it also in some other dialogues. But you cannot begin reading a Platonic dialogue and say: I will see what is absent there. [Laughter] You would have to have a list of perhaps a hundred items, and you would always look at these hundred items and forget what is there. You know, you must have some definite reason for wondering about what he abstracts from. The abstraction from *nomos* and everything connected with *nomos* is the same as the obvious abstraction from taking care of the virtue of the non-privileged men. The virtue of the non-privileged men is achieved through the laws, or at least not without the help of the laws. We have read some passages in Plato's *Republic*, book 4, which I read to you, in which this occurs. And this abstraction from the virtues of non-privileged men is indeed very important for the *Meno*; and this leads to the conclusion that there are only two kinds of virtue possible: that of the knowers (and whether that is possible is left open in the dialogue), or that of the divine men. And what about us? What happens to us? I mean,[86] [there is] not even a suggestion that we should imitate the divine men or should obey them. We are completely disregarded. That is an extraordinary thing, and I think [it] throws great light on the dialogue. To that extent, I would maintain that this is important. But I asked you, at least those of you who know the Greek letters, to check and double-check whether I did not overlook a use of *nomos* or of any of its derivatives.

So now we have to conclude this session today, and I hope I will see you in good health and in good spirits a week from today for the examination.

END OF COURSE

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[1] Deleted "of the link between the passage on…or."
[2] Deleted "piety."
[3] Deleted "There is then…This."
[4] Deleted "the answer—."
[5] Deleted "Now it is perfectly true…."
[6] Deleted "Therefore I think."
[7] Deleted "There are names of characters…."
[8] Deleted "but"
[9] Deleted "So in particular…."
[10] Deleted "dramatic… is a performed…a."
[11] Deleted "come that he."
[12] Deleted "but."

[13] Changed from "Because when it…when vulgar virtue is spoken of explicitly at the end, the virtue based on opinion only, then it is done on the premise that virtue based on knowledge—the true virtue—is impossible."
[14] Deleted "His motivation."
[15] Deleted "the third—."
[16] Deleted "that."
[17] Deleted "for."
[18] Deleted "the slave…."
[19] Deleted "questioning…proper."
[20] Deleted "this reaction to the…."
[21] Deleted "has"
[22] Deleted "Of what…."
[23] Deleted "must be like knowledge—it."
[24] Deleted "it is…."
[25] Deleted "…If there are teachers…."
[26] Deleted "this kind…this."
[27] Deleted "the question which was not answered before."
[28] Deleted "going…."
[29] Deleted "more…much."
[30] Deleted "means"
[31] Deleted "Soc…let us take."
[32] Deleted "it belonged…but."
[33] Deleted "exist"
[34] Deleted "And…well it is…that is…."
[35] Changed from "Apart…The concern of man—the concern, concern with happiness—is presented there as the desire for possessing the good always—always."
[36] Changed from "And then they write at the top of the one column—Socrates writes it, an I"…a "J," that means justice, and an "I," injustice."
[37] Deleted "perhaps, that Socrates was"
[38] Deleted "two other…there are."
[39] Deleted "also is…."
[40] Deleted "No, no…But."
[41] Deleted "perhaps…."
[42] Deleted "Yeah no…But let us…."
[43] Deleted "one cannot do that because…."
[44] Deleted "Yeah well, let me…."
[45] Deleted "the *Apology*, in."
[46] Deleted "had said…Meletus."
[47] Deleted "…I mean that is not…."
[48] Deleted "Yeah, no, that is…Yes, I think one can…."
[49] Deleted "leads to…This."
[50] Deleted "No, in the recollection passage, in the myth passage, as it is ordinarily called, there…two things are…two conclusions are drawn from the recollection thesis, or the immortality thesis. A) Live as piously as possible. B) Devote your life to learning, to understanding."
[51] Deleted "called…is."
[52] Deleted "is the sphere…And the."
[53] Deleted "in Kant…."
[54] Deleted "—you know?" Changed from "But these are only ministerial things and subordinate; therefore they…the order of rank, that is the key question that is settled for him. Now to the full understanding of this fact which Socrates proves in his way inductively—for example, he looks around and takes the greatest statesmen."
[55] Deleted "you know."
[56] Deleted "how…."
[57] Deleted "something…."
[58] Changed from "One can say…No, that would lead too far, I mean to state the Platonic doctrine of why poetry is a lower kind of reason than philosophy."

[59] Deleted "Is that a correct statement?"
[60] Deleted "yeah, sure."
[61] Deleted "by people."
[62] Deleted "I mean, do we not have"
[63] Deleted "call it"
[64] Deleted "And these would…they…that they are…."
[65] Deleted "the noble lie. Plato denies"
[66] Deleted "Because I mean…I disregard natural science because they don't claim, or mathematics, because they don't claim to deal with this matter."
[67] Deleted "subject…with this."
[68] Deleted "does our social…what."
[69] Deleted "So they are…and."
[70] Deleted "You…A rational society…."
[71] Deleted "is…."
[72] Deleted "show…would."
[73] Deleted "No, the *daimonion* would not have that…I always…When, in the *Rep*…."
[74] Deleted "and so on."
[75] Deleted "By its…."
[76] Deleted "so something…and we have… what..and we have…."
[77] Changed from "No, no, he was a rather despicable fellow and I think he did not even have that kind of glamor which Cleon had a generation before, you know? Cleon who after all, who did this extraordinary thing in Philus, you know. And… he…[inaudible word."
[78] Changed from "But it would have very little to do with…would have nothing to do, philosophy as such, with sacrificing and prayers."
[79] Deleted "become..you know, they do not have…that's an."
[80] Deleted "Regarding…."
[81] Deleted "so I have a certain…."
[82] Deleted "I must…."
[83] Deleted "But…that is of course…you have to know what."
[84] Deleted "The question…."
[85] Deleted "there."
[86] Deleted "…And."